

Find us on
Facebook
([click here](#))

MALE SURVIVOR

eNEWSLETTER

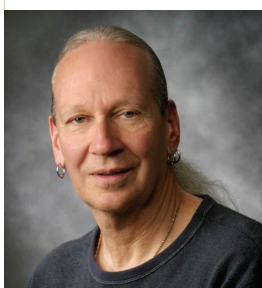
are committed to preventing and eliminating all forms of sexual victimization of boys and men through support, treatment, research, education, advocacy, and activism.

The MaleSurvivor Interview

Explore with us the origins of MaleSurvivor in our interview with two of the men who were among the fathers of the National Organization on Male Sexual Victimization (NOMSV), which later became MaleSurvivor. Ken Singer and Jim Struve—together with



Ken Singer



Jim Struve

Peter Dimock, a key participant who was unavailable for this interview—drew their inspiration from the great Quaker activist, social worker, and prison reformer, Fay Honey Knopp.

Honey dedicated her life to the prevention and treatment of sexual abuse as well as mentoring and supporting those who work

with offenders and survivors.

The following interview was conducted by Richard Cleverly on behalf of MaleSurvivor.

Ken Singer: Jim, let me ask you something. Do you have any of the old correspondence we had between the two of us and Honey?

Jim Struve: No, I never saved any of that. I never in my wildest imagination thought there'd be any archival relevance to that because we were doing it by hand. That was before we were really doing it by email.

KS You'll be happy to hear that due to my laziness of not shredding or getting rid of stuff that I have everything going back to the beginning.

JS That's fabulous!

MaleSurvivor: Will you share it with us? That's really a find, that's great.

(Continued on page 26)

Vol. 1 No. 3 April 2008

THE MISSION OF THE MALESURVIVOR ENEWSLETTER is to provide useful information to promote health, discussion and connections for male survivors of sexual abuse and those who support us.

Features

<u>EVENTS IN SALT LAKE CITY</u>	4
<u>MS 2007 CONFERENCE</u>	5
<u>POEM: VULTURE</u>	7
<u>FRIENDS AND FAMILY</u>	8
<u>POEM: ENAWENE NAWE</u>	13
<u>IN THE FIRST PERSON</u>	14
<u>MOVING ON</u>	16
<u>FILM REVIEW</u>	18
<u>IN THE FIRST PERSON</u>	23
<u>FILM REVIEW</u>	24

Departments

<u>WEEKENDS OF RECOVERY</u>	2
<u>EVENT CALENDAR</u>	3
<u>MY TURN</u>	6

Editorial : History Lesson

Welcome to the third quarterly issue of the MaleSurvivor Newsletter! This quarter, we explore the history of the movement that led to the founding of MaleSurvivor, as recounted by two of the key players. Our lead article, Against the Tide, is a courageous and inspiring story of a family's struggle to deal with the profound consequences of sexual abuse. We feature "First Person" and



Richard Cleverly

"Moving On" stories of recovery and hope, as well as two movie reviews from a unique perspective, and two poems about a child's survival strategies. Enjoy! ■

Weekends of Recovery

You Too Can Experience the Wonder

By Howard Fradkin, PhD

Chairperson, Weekends of Recovery

A few weeks ago, 27 courageous men journeyed to Ben Lomond, California, and in the middle of a beautiful Sequoia forest, they experienced wonder. They had to wander around a lot in their own issues, and especially in their own fears, but as the weekend went on, they began to let down, they began to feel support, and in the process, they experienced wonder.



Howard Fradkin

Have you ever wondered what might be possible for you if you could leave the life you are currently living? What if you could somehow or other get unstuck?

of the same steps along the path they had, and they got it in a way others rarely or ever had.

A number of these men had never told their story before to another survivor, and they were surprised at how much common ground they found. They experienced wonder as they gave themselves permission to be playful with another man and feeling safe enough to experiment, when in the past they wound up being very hurt while playing with a man.

Wonder happened too as these men felt and trusted—perhaps for the first time—that they mattered, that their story mattered, that their hurt mattered to others. Wonder happened as they got to Sunday and they knew, deep in their hearts and in their spirits, that they were changed from the men who arrived on Friday. They left feeling real hope that they no longer were stuck in the place they were when

they arrived. They knew there were real possibilities now for a different type of life, a real possibility to relate to the significant people in their lives in a much more open and vulnerable way. And they knew that despite their greatest fears, they had found confidence where

they didn't believe they had any, and they found strength where before they regarded themselves as weak and unworthy.

As facilitators, we have the honor and the privilege of guiding this journey of wonder. Despite the fact we've now completed 20 of these Weekends, the wonder never ceases to amaze me.

In fact, if anything, it grows with each weekend, and I am moved in ways so deep it is difficult to even find words to describe how I am changed, and how our team is changed by the mutual experience of wonder. ■

***"Have you ever
wondered what might
be possible for you if
you could leave the life
you are currently
living?"***

What is wonder? For these 27 men, it was the experience of seeing, perhaps for the first time, that a different type of life was indeed possible for them. It was the experience of knowing that despite all previous awareness, there are people in the world to whom they could and did turn for help and guidance. For some of them, they had turned to professionals before, and the experience was awful. But this time they felt supported and cared about. These 27 men also experienced the wonder of being understood, really understood, by brothers who had walked in many



(uncredited photo)

Event Calendar

Weekends of Recovery

Date	Type	Place
September 5-7, 2008	Advanced	Alta, Utah
October 17-19, 2008	Level 1	Kirkridge Retreat Center in Bangor, PA
November 5-7, 2008	Level 1	Mysthaven Country Retreat Spa; Stouffville, Ontario, Canada

Professional Development

Date	Place	Description
August 4-7, 2008	Uri, Switzerland	Healing the Healers Retreat (HTH) for men and women working with survivors of sexual abuse. This will be an opportunity to share the difficulties and joys of this work with others who do similar work—as professionals or in the voluntary sector. We will focus on stress, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, self-care, relaxation, play, and fun. The focus of one day will be on activism. Bring your creativity and sense of humor! Led by Mike Lew

Events in Salt Lake City

Salt Lake City "Blizzard"

By Jim Struve, LCSW

The snow has stopped falling and the spring flowers are coming up in the shadows of the magnificent Wasatch Mountains of Utah. But there is a blizzard of activities here in the Salt Lake community that will undoubtedly expand awareness about male survivors.

The Salt Lake City Rape Recovery Center declared April to be "Sexual Assault Awareness Month." As part of their outreach activities, they hosted a luncheon presentation—conducted by me—on the topic "Working With Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse."

The *Catalyst Magazine*, a local publication that addresses health and wellness issues, has included in their May issue a feature article that I wrote about male survivors. The Catalyst has a circulation of over 30,000. To read this article ("Living in the Shadow of Shame: Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse"), access the [magazine's website](#).

Plan B, a local progressive theatre company, is producing the play *The Tricky Part* from May 30th thru June 15th. This is an excellent play about male sexual abuse that was performed—to rave reviews—at the MaleSurvivor National Conference

WOR alumnus John Walker; the theater director; the play's performer (an excellent local actor); and I will participate in this panel.

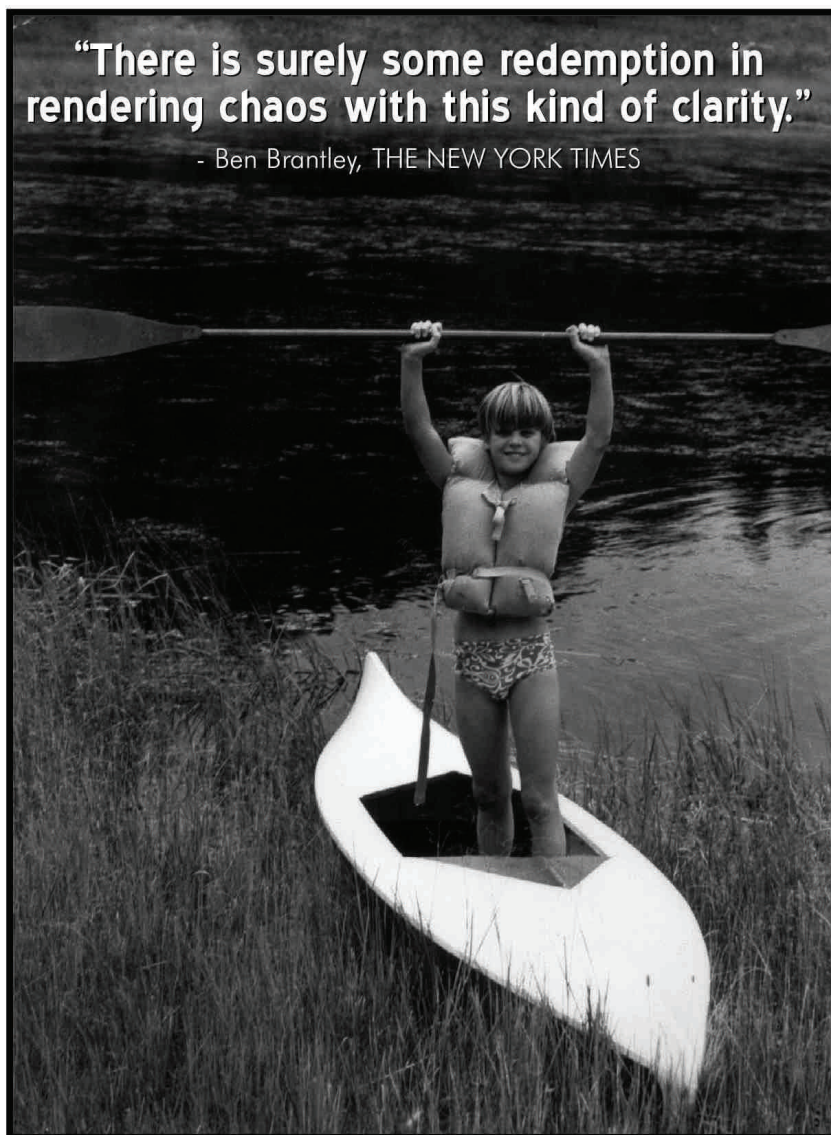
In addition, there are plans to incorporate some Weekends of

Recovery T-shirts into the set design, and there will probably be a display of WOR T-shirts in the theater's lobby area.

We anticipate that the *Salt Lake Tribune* will review the play and we are in discussions with them to do a more expansive article on the issue of male survivors.

Finally, the Salt Lake Film Society and the Utah AIDS Foundation, in conjunction with the Plan B Theatre Company, will host a screening of the movie *The Boys of St. Vincent* on June 2nd. This movie screening will be free to anyone in the community who wants to attend.

Let's hope that this "blizzard" of publicity about male sexual abuse makes a difference



Playwright Martin Moran, age 12

The Tricky Part, a play produced by the [Plan B Theatre Company](#)

in New York City last fall.

Following the performance of *The Tricky Part* on June 1st, there will be a panel discussion for the audience.

here in Utah. ■

The MaleSurvivor 2007 International Conference

My Impressions of the Conference

By Chris Anderson

Last October, MaleSurvivor organized the 2007 International Conference on Male Sexual Abuse at John Jay College in New York City. The conference brought together hundreds of people from all over the world for a magnificent weekend of empowering, healing, and learning experiences. For those of you who have never attended an MS conference, let me tell you, this is not your typical academic convocation. Most conferences are fairly staid affairs where papers are presented, controversial topics are generally kept to a minimum, and rarely do the attendees actually interact with the people whom they are actually studying, working with, and presenting papers on. The MS conference, by contrast, is a weekend that is as much about doing the work of recovery as understanding it. There is a constant hum of energy and optimism in the air as all around you survivors are talking with one another and with the therapists, advocates, and activists who are all working so hard to understand how we can all help one another heal and move towards a better life.

Though I've been a survivor my whole life, I have only been focusing on my abuse and its aftermath for a short time. The conference was, for me, a fantastic opportunity to catch up with some of the people I've already met on this part of my journey. It was also a great chance to meet and learn from more people who are intimately acquainted with the struggles and challenges survivors face, and who

have so much to share with us. One of the great frustrations in organizing or attending the conference is knowing that so many people who could so benefit from the experience can't attend the conference. In that spirit, I wanted to share with you some of my reflections and experiences of that weekend. I've included some highlights from the first two days of the conference.

Thursday Oct. 25, 2007

I attended [Mike Lew's](#) pre-conference workshop for survivors. Having already attended a MaleSurvivor Weekend of Recovery, I was pretty excited about this.

There is something truly special that happens when a group of men who have all been abused come together, some for the first time, looking for support and healing.

So much has been said about Mike Lew's extraordinary efforts in recognizing the true extent of the scourge of CSA in boys and the pioneering work he has done to try to bring the special needs of this community to light; it's a little like walking into a private concert being given by your favorite rock star. But Mike sets everyone at ease with his gracious, humble, and open presence. From the first moment to the last, he is constantly reminding us to pay attention to everything that we are feeling in the moment, to watch how the faces in the room transform from those of strangers in the morning into individuals with real human-

ness as the day goes on. Throughout the day, Mike leads us in exercises that sometimes push buttons and make us uncomfortable, but never lead to harm. With the help of my brothers, some of whom I'm beginning to feel increasingly close to, I confront some of my fears,

and find a little more strength inside of myself than I had at the beginning of the day. Later in the evening, a group of us from the workshop meet up for dinner and relax in a kind of fellowship few of us would have thought possible in the morning.

Friday Oct. 26, 2007

The conference really begins. I show up and spend a few minutes soaking in the atmosphere. There is excitement and energy buzzing all around as people are busily trying to check in and get their bearings. Tony Gonzalez opened the conference in the auditorium by ringing the meditation bowl that is such a central element of the Weekends of Recovery. I am immediately brought back to my WOR and remember the faces and voices of the facilitators and my brothers, and I wonder how many people I'll be able to find and touch base with.

After the opening remarks, Dr. Stephen Gold gave a remarkable talk about the paradox survivors face in trying desperately to recover a "normal" childhood that never existed. It is for me one of the highlights of the conference. His insights into the nature of trauma,

(Continued on page 22)

My Turn

Why Did You Leave Me?

By Dale English, MS CAS

I recently watched a movie about the 1994 genocide in Rwanda called ***Beyond the Gates***. What I need to say about my experience of this film has nothing to do with how the movie was made or the quality of the acting. What is important to me is that the horror I took in actually happened to real people and much of the emotional turmoil that these forgotten people endured has happened to us as survivors.



Dale English

As a survivor of clergy sexual abuse, I was instantly engaged by the fact that the setting was a school run by the Church. This little piece of land behind a fence was known by the people

as a safe place. It was expected that whenever civil strife broke out that the people would flock to its gates and beg entry. There was something innocent and magical about their belief in this apparent promise of safety. Yet the presence of foreign troops in the middle of the compound made it all too clear that the reality of power gone crazy lies just outside the gates, dangerous as a mad dog.

Power. Too much or too little creates an imbalance that too often leads to tragedy. And power in the hands of people filled with con-

scious or unconscious hate will only lead to the abuse of those who cannot defend themselves. The people in the compound believed that the troops would use their power to protect them and yet the soldiers were impotent since they were ordered to "monitor" the peace rather than "protect" it and those dependent upon it. And although the international community sent men to rescue the whites, they turned a blind eye and sent no one for the innocent black men, women, and children. Even the priest in charge of the school chuckled hopelessly that it would be senseless to contact the hierarchy of the Church for assistance. And well intentioned helpers would do what they could to expose the horror that no one in the comfortable world would want to see. And yet, as the end drew near, even they would make largely self soothing promises that they couldn't or wouldn't keep.

I felt like a voyeur watching the events unfold knowing only too well what fate awaited these people whom the priest called "the children of God." I felt the powerlessness of the people and those struggling with the impossible task of assisting them as best they could. I felt an inner voice scream out for someone to rescue them even though in fact almost all have been dead for nearly fourteen years. How important it was to me that this experience brought me back almost 45 years to a cabin in

the woods of New Hampshire when a man of God used his power over me to get what he wanted. I would later learn that another priest had followed us to the scene of the crime, watched what was happening and walked away doing nothing to stop it.

"How important it was to me that this experience brought me back almost 45 years to a cabin in the woods of New Hampshire when a man of God used his power over me to get what he wanted."

As the movie draws to an end some five years after the massacre, one of the female students from the school who had survived makes her way to England in the hope of finding the young teacher who escaped with the foreign troops. There at a prestigious school they have a difficult and necessary conversation about the past and a promise he had made to her.

She asked, "Why did you leave me?" The young man—filled with guilt for every breath he had taken over the past five years—reached deeply within himself and gave this courageous young woman the only gift he could. He said to her, "Because I was afraid to die." And in that moment of honesty, there was acceptance and the beginnings of healing. Oh, that each of us could be blessed with such a moment.

Instead, a day does not go by that in our minds and hearts we do not ask our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, relatives, friends, strangers, witnesses, religious persons, and God the particular question each of us has that always begins with...

"W H Y ?"

Poetry

Vulture

By Dale C.

I was about five the first time I met Vulture.
My neighbor had already been raping me in the backyard by then.
I think Vulture knew; enough was enough.
As he swooped down, I seemed to know instinctively how to grab on.
I had no fear of him.
It was like I'd always known him.
He didn't swoop down and take all of me.
He just took that inner part of me, the part that could feel the pain.
Perhaps it was my soul.
I remember looking down on myself as we rose, Vulture holding me up.
I could see the pain in my trembling body, but no longer felt it.
Instead I felt the strength in Vulture's wings as he thrust us higher.
I sensed that he didn't want me to see myself down there as he reached for the thermal that would take us away.
Once we were high enough we took off in some other direction, speeding along.
The feeling of flying with Vulture was the most free and wonderful feeling.
I wanted it to last forever.
But after a while we had to fly back.
Vulture could not keep me forever.
He had come to teach me, not to keep me.
It was then, when he dropped me back in my body, that I knew.
I knew that I could make that part of me fly away whenever I needed to.
After that day, I was nearly always able to fly up in the sky when needed.
Years later my neighbor had moved and I no longer needed to fly.
In fact I could no longer make myself fly.
I would lie in the field as still as possible waiting and hoping that Vulture would come back for me so we could fly together once more.
Although he would circle high above, he would not come for me again, not like that first time.
But Vulture has always been nearby.
He comes to me often but not to fly.
He comes to give me strength.
We will only fly together one more time.
And it will be the last flight for me in this lifetime. ■



Friends and Family

Against the Tide

By Jeanne Stevenson

I saw a magazine advertisement a while back featuring an innovative, compact "endless" lap pool, and I was intrigued that it can be installed almost anywhere. The pool operates by projecting a challenging current against which a person can vigorously swim for hours yet remain stationary. This may seem like a plug for the manufacturer, but the truth is, the image of constrained motion best describes the cluster of years prior to my husband's disclosure. My husband, our



Jeanne Stevenson

abuse [CSA].

My husband and I have been participating in the discussion forums on MaleSurvivor since 2006, trying to make sense of the many issues surrounding his abuse. We've been determined to untwist a pretzel that we all have become baked within. Even though I have dedicated many months to gaining a better perspective, I have not even come close to truly understanding the great impact the past has held over all of our lives present day.

The fallout from CSA is complicated. There is a certain dynamic that infected our household from

something that happened to my husband over thirty years ago. When introduced, this "infection" contaminated our entire family and we all took on our own unique version of dysfunction as a result.

The thing is, when a father falls into depression and acts out through fits of anger, spending sprees, and the overall desire to self-destruct, this behavior has an adverse effect on everyone around him. Just as the child survivor needed a voice in his world of yesterday, the children of the present-day survivor have needs that must be considered as well. It is my hope that by sharing some of the challenges that my children shouldered, many of the complexities surrounding these issues can be further examined and better understood.

The following is an account of the struggles we are currently dealing with and the impact my husband's childhood sexual abuse has had on our children by association. I believe that by divulging our story, others may find hope within their family as well. The only power we hold over past abuse is in the strength of our words and the ability to share our failures and successes along the path as we journey towards recovery.

In the beginning of our marriage, my husband was a warm and magnanimous spirit. We often shared lighthearted humor and embraced

life to the fullest. When we had our first child, a daughter, my husband and I reacted to the tiny miracle in our lives with great amazement. We treated parenthood as if no one before us had ever experienced such wonders of caring for a baby. We marked every milestone with great enthusiasm and pride. We were a team in this adventure, but the greatest aspect was how we bonded as a family and looked towards our daughter's future with great optimism.

Around the time our daughter turned ten; none of us knew that my husband was a CSA survivor or that the sudden cloud that overshadowed his personality was triggered by her birthday. He had realized that his older brother had sexually abused him at that same age, and he agonized that his

childhood had been maliciously stolen away. Although this cloud looming over him was dark, cruel, and building in intensity to eventually storm on our lives, he only sensed a hint of its magnitude. There were unsettling gusts within, but for the most part he remained confused and tried to bury it all in denial.

My husband withdrew into himself, doing his best to numb away the sudden onslaught

of pain. He began to self-destruct by drinking wine and passing out in front of the television each evening. He spent money we really could not afford to spend, called into work sick on a regular basis,

"My husband had admitted at one point that he 'thought he might have been' sexually abused as a boy, but when I questioned him further, it was apparent that he was not ready to fully disclose."

and lashed out with fits of anger over nothing of significance against those he felt safest to release his frustrations upon, his family.

We were constantly on alert, doing whatever we could so as not to upset him. It took a great deal of therapy for me to realize that the anger was uniquely his issue, and for us to carry the blame for his next outburst was totally unacceptable. The therapist made it clear that when my husband threw fits, his lashing out was a choice that he made in reacting to his surroundings and circumstances. The bottom line: If he could control his anger at his job, he could spare us his wrath at home as well. This is currently a work in progress and I am hopeful that he will find his way towards a healthier manner of releasing his frustrations at life.

I must take responsibility for my part in this equation. I believe I was clouded by the fondness for the person my husband used to be as opposed to recognizing the person he had suddenly become. I kept hoping for that better tomorrow to arrive; for him to just snap back into life with us, but that tomorrow never seemed to happen. I understand now that my hope was impossible without the guidance and support from a trained professional.

My husband had admitted at one point that he "thought he might have been" sexually abused as a boy, but when I questioned him further, it was apparent that he was not ready to fully disclose. So the only choice I had until he was ready to deal with his past was to be patient and wait. I focused on our children and offered them the best that I knew how to give.

Unaware of the sexual abuse issues, our oldest daughter believed that the presence of our son (who was two at the time) was somehow to blame for her dad no longer being involved in her life. This resentment grew within her, and even though she has been told the truth regarding her father's sexual abuse, she continues to hold a grudge towards her little brother for stealing



An "Endless" Pool

her daddy away. In her mind, her dad withdrew from her life soon after he was born; therefore this was all her little brother's fault.

I received a phone call from the student counselor at my daughter's school when she was in the fifth grade. "Your daughter seems very unhappy," I was told. "We would like to have the school social worker meet with her for a few sessions to evaluate her situation." In retrospect, this was just a symptom of a much larger issue trickling down from above.

With the help of her student counselor, we moved forward in a feeble attempt at normalcy. I encouraged our daughter to become more involved in school activities; having something positive to focus on eased her depression. My hus-

band finally decided to address his low emotional state with our family physician who prescribed antidepressants. Little did we know that taking antidepressants without therapy was just treating the symptoms as opposed to working through the underlying cause.

Although my husband's anger was now on mute, his laughter—which once was contagious—had disappeared as well. I viewed our household as an empty shell of what it used to be. The only way I saw to cope was to hold on and take each day as it arrived, as lackluster as it had become.

My husband often excused himself from work, complaining about many self-diagnosed illnesses over the years. He projected his unhappiness onto his job and transferred his feelings towards his abuser onto his boss. Just after his disclosure in 2006, he missed nearly a month of work.

Although we were all dedicated to therapy at that point and addressing the issues to improve our quality of life, he was slowly swirling to the bottom of the pool, and there was nothing I could do but watch him sink.

Both our children picked up on this unhealthy pattern. Our daughter missed so much school during her middle school years that her absence pulled her grades down from straight A's to just barely average. To this day, our son greets me before school with a thermometer in hand, hoping for a temperature so that he too can remain at home. It is a pattern they both picked up from their father, a pattern that the therapist has tried to rectify by encouraging my husband to face the unpleasantness of his job in-

(Continued on page 10)

Against the Tide
(Continued from page 9)

stead of avoiding it. The therapist's hope is that my husband can lead by example and that our children will fall back into a healthy pattern of attendance right along with him.

Several weeks ago, I was viewing some home movies taken when our son was three years old. We were at my husband's sister's house, and our family was in charge of the annual Easter egg hunt. My husband was passing out plastic bags for the children to use. He was rather friendly towards the other children present, but when he went to offer our son a bag, my husband's entire disposition changed to that of annoyance. Our son was not paying attention and my husband reacted with an undercurrent of disapproval.

For a very long time, I was blind to the dynamic within our own household. Looking back at that home movie, I now understand the extent of my own ignorance. I feel deep regret for not recognizing this attitude and insisting on family therapy years ago.

A rather profound realization struck as I was writing this article. Just as I and many abuse survivors harbor resentment towards our parents for not identifying dysfunction and then working to change it, I found myself in a similar position and also chose avoidance. The truth was, both my husband and I failed our children by denying these issues. From the perspective of our children, we were no better than the patterning our parents instilled in us growing up. Unfortu-



(uncredited photo)

nately, time is one thing none of us can ever bring back for a rewrite. All we can do is learn from the past and move forward, never to repeat the same errors in judgment again.

Our son projected tremendous behavioral issues for a very long time. For example, tucking him into bed at night involved two hours of chasing him around, reading to him, pleading with him, singing to him...and the end result was that he would only settle down when he was ready to settle down.

There were other symptoms as well. The issue that gave me the greatest concern was our son's violent temper. He was constantly acting out in fits of rage. Between my our son's tantrums and my husband's anger, we were living in a very dysfunctional realm.

When our son began kindergarten, I kept waiting for the inevitable phone call from the principal. I knew that any day there would be the need for a meeting to discuss his unreasonable outbursts. Weeks, months, and then a few years passed with no need for a meeting.

His teachers raved during parent-teacher conferences about what a wonderful and compassionate boy we had raised. I was told he was a joy to have in class. I sighed tre-

mendous relief but had to question, *a joy, our son?* I was very proud of him for his achievements, but confused as to how he could be so easy going at school and yet so difficult at home. When he was in a good mood, he was the most loving boy anyone could ask for; when he was angry, it was best to duck from the explosion of tantrums. I was the safe person in his

life against whom he often directed his anger; I became my son's emotional and sometimes physical punching bag. His approaching teenage years gave me great concern. If he could not control this rage when he was little, was I destined to become battered by my own son?

I knew our boy was deeply unhappy. I recall a particular heart to heart discussion we shared as he

was unwinding from the day a couple of years ago. He was fighting tears as he mentioned his belief that he would someday end up in jail because he was such a mean person. The pain that he carried broke my heart and I had no idea how to reach him. I tried to be reassuring, saying his behavior was just a stage in boyhood and that he would someday outgrow it. On the outside I offered him hope, but on the inside I was overwrought with worry. I wanted greatness for my son and yet I did not know how to pull him out from this angry cycle.

Even more confusing was the fact that I had followed the same recipe I had implemented in raising our daughter. I tried a balance of love, goofiness (fun/laughter), patience,

"The issue that gave me the greatest concern was our son's violent temper. He was constantly acting out in fits of rage. Between my husband's anger and our son's tantrums, we were living in a very dysfunctional realm."

listening, and offering him choices to help build his self esteem. I felt that sticking to the same program would render a similar positive outcome. As time passed, I grew weary. I began to question my ability to parent my son, and in the end, I felt as if I were failing.

I honestly believed for a while that our son had Asperger's Syndrome since it runs in my family and his behavioral symptoms were very similar. Upon the therapist's suggestion, we had him tested to rule out seizures or any sort of brain abnormality. When the therapist concluded that our son's issues were due to my husband's dysfunction, I was filled with disbelief. How could our son's behavior be related to my husband and his childhood sexual abuse issues from thirty years ago? My husband's issues were his issues; our son's issues were separate and apart, right? Denial in this situation was impossible, for the truth always seems to find the light of day.

My husband's sensitivity as a boy and the way our son reacted to having his feelings hurt were quite similar. When my husband was young, he was mistreated by his older sister and his abuser-brother. He was often teased by them, resulting in his stomping away in tears. This running off and crying mode was the same emotional outpouring that our son expressed when his feelings were hurt present day. I questioned whether this was a genetic issue or a patterned response to our son's environment. The puzzle of course was how could this possibly be patterned?

After all, neither my daughter nor I were mistreating him, my husband had too little contact with him to cause such issues, yet our son reacted in the same way his father did to the emotional abuse he experienced over thirty years ago.

We managed a great turning point during therapy one evening when my husband realized that he had projected how he felt about his abuser-brother onto our son. Unknowingly, he viewed everything that our boy did as the child attempting to manipulate him, when in reality, our son was just acting out in order to receive a shred of his father's attention. It seemed negative attention was better than no attention at all. It was one of those "ah-ha"

breakthroughs that every family deserves to experience. This realization has set us on the path for positive change, and in tiny steps we are currently striving towards a better life.

Taking this a step further, my husband's relationship with his father was never close. They had little in common and had never really bonded.

So what example did my husband have to model "how to be a good father?" None. His father was physically and emotionally abusive. Everyone who grew up in that environment was afraid his next drinking binge could trigger another backlash of abuse.

Boys need their fathers to instill

positive values into their lives. In the past, when our son asked his dad to do an activity with him, my husband's reply was often, "After I check my email, after this television show, after I take my medicine..."



(uncredited photo)

His response was always "after." When my husband finally made an effort to spend time with our son, everything needed to be under strict control by my husband. "Stop laughing so loud, knock off that

screaming, don't make a mess, stop acting so hyper, no rough and tumble playing in here." He was saying to his son, "Stop acting like a little boy who constantly annoys me."

For a long time I remained oblivious to the patterning and our son's issues. I remained that way until the therapist suggested my husband apologize to our son for all the past negatives he had imposed on the boy. I noticed a difference in our son within two days after that apology: He was much calmer. It was as if he finally felt acceptance by his dad and this acceptance allowed him to love himself as well. This act of asking for forgiveness opened up the doorway for a much needed relationship between the two of them.

A week or so ago, I happened to have a few moments to spare in front of the television. (I am not fond of network television, so to catch this program was kismet.) I channel surfed, stopping on a nanny reality show. They were featuring a family whose father-son dynamic reminded me a lot of how my husband interacted with our son. The two boys on the show

(Continued on page 12)

Against the Tide
(Continued from page 11)

behaved exactly the same way that our son had been behaving: violent outbursts, destructive tendencies, total disrespect for others, negative attitudes, and the like.

It took some strong truths from Nanny to help the father understand the importance of his presence in the lives of his children. At one point, this father admitted that he had no clue how to be a good influence because his dad pretty much ignored him when he was growing up. Although these were strangers, it could have been my family on national television. In a flash, everything the therapist had been telling us, everything surrounding the patterning of my husband and his abusive relatives, finally struck home with me.

When my daughter entered the room that evening, I was sobbing. Of course, she failed to understand why it was Mom would be so moved by *The Nanny Show*. The truth was, I was not crying out of regret, I was crying because I felt

great hope from their example. It was a joyful realization that a father was willing to change and go the distance for his boys. It was a beautiful moment to appreciate.

There was never a relationship established between the father and his sons on that show and then with a bit of encouragement, there was. To me this transition was an absolute miracle. Within weeks, their lives were changed all for the better. I so desperately wanted that happy ending for my family as well. It made my dream of a positive outcome seem just within reach.

I'm hopeful that my husband, my children, and I have stepped

out of that endless lap pool and are now swimming in a place where we can view the landscape as we pass in a steady progression. The water may be polluted from years of abuse, but our hearts will never be contaminated. Our ability to love one another and grow in unity as a family is our key to a better future.

I envision us standing on solid ground sometime in the future, freed from the dreadful consequences of childhood sexual abuse, and our children and future generations will benefit from our determination to swim against challenging currents. We shall declare ultimate victory over such dysfunction and realize how much stronger we have become, all from the challenge of the swim. ■

***"I envision us standing
on solid ground
sometime in the future,
freed from the dreadful
consequences of
childhood sexual abuse,
and our children and
future generations will
benefit from our
determination to swim
against challenging
currents."***



Poetry

Enawene Nawe

By Dale C.

I figured it out when I was just a kid.
 God made a big mistake.
 He screwed up.
 He put me with the wrong family.
 Somehow I always knew.
 I was supposed to be a little boy,
 running naked with the Enawene Nawe.

I would see a photo of an
 Indian village
 and I just knew that that
 was where
 I was supposed to be.
 Not with this family he put
 me in.

I'd see a picture of a native
 boy
 playing with his friends,
 wrestling, swimming, run-
 ning, climbing.
 Those were supposed to
 be my friends.

My father would have taken
 me each year

with the other men and boys
 to catch fish in the river to feed our tribe.
 He would have told me the stories of my people.

I'd help him gather wood, get water.
 Watch out for my little brothers and sisters.
 My life would have been better there.

My Enawene parents would have
 never let the guy in the hammock next to us
 do the things my neighbor in this life did to me.

I should have grown up happy and free,
 with my Enawene family.

It was not meant for me to learn what shame is.
 I should have never grown up

feeling dirty and used.

The parents I got told me there was a reason
 I was always reading about Pygmies, Aborigines,
 Yanomami.

They said it was a sign from God.
 I was supposed to go save them, change them.
 These parents did not understand.

They did not get it.
 I did not want to change
 them.

I wanted to be them.
 They didn't need to be
 saved.

They needed to save me.
 Sometimes, growing up, I
 would run naked
 through the woods near
 our home
 and swim in the creek
 there, alone.

Trying to be Enawene.
 Right now among the
 Enawene



(uncredited photo)

there is living a man my age.

He was supposed to be me,
 living my life here.

But God made a big mistake.
 This man is probably wearing a pair of pants
 and a t-shirt that says JESUS SAVES.
 Most likely he works as a guide or translator
 for a missionary there.

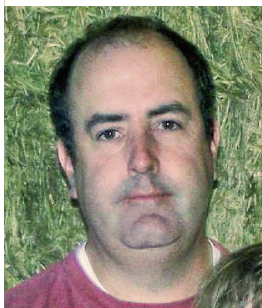
I know just how he feels.
 He feels totally out of place. ■

In the First Person

Breaking the Silence

By Rob Brown

I am frequently asked, "What triggered your disclosure?" or "What caused you to start dealing with 'it' now, after so many years of avoiding it?" The answer is clearly not a simple or a short one. During these healing days of pain, confusion, and frustration, I occasionally need to look back and revisit those questions. I occasionally need to reflect on why I'm willing to allow such pain into this phase in my life.



Rob Brown

The answer is that I began to face the childhood sexual abuse (CSA) in my life after a series of events late in 2006.

In September 2006, my spiritual

strength was at an all-time high. I stated to my wife, my pastor, and others that I felt an incredible sense of confidence and comfort with my relationship with God. It seemed to me as if I were specially prepared for something great and beneficial to mankind—or something wonderfully constructive was going to happen with me in the name of God. I felt as if I could take on a heavy battle for God and come out shining. Little did I know what was truly coming.

In October of 2006, I was driving across Texas on a business trip when I got a cell call from my wife. She was clearly quite upset. Someone had told her that one of my six

year old daughter's friends had disclosed that she had been sexually abused by a twelve year old boy in our church over an extended period of time. This was certainly tragic news; however, it was nothing I hadn't heard before. There's a lot of CSA out there in the world, after all. I began to go through a progression of thoughts along the lines of, "How will we handle this in the church?" "I wonder why this boy did that." "What kind of help can we find for the girl and her family?"

During the call with my wife, we exchanged the usual horror-reactions and all the standard "how could this happen?" feelings that you would expect. Then she said something that just reached through my emotional defense wall and ripped the heart from my chest: "Sarah said she had hiding places." The next thing I remember is hastily pulling off the interstate and crying uncontrollably in that rental car. I cried for hours; hours turned into days. If I even heard Sarah's name, I would immediately begin to cry. To this day, 16 months later, I cannot even think those words "Sarah said she had hiding places" without an immediate cry-reaction.

My wife Lorie dismissed my extreme reactions as "normal Rob stuff." "He always reacts strongly to kids being hurt." But the reality was something far deeper: Little Robbie had hiding places too; he knew exactly how bad it has become

when a child begins to create such havens. But I could never tell *anyone* about "that."

Later that same month, two boys from Missouri were recovered alive by the police after having been kidnapped and abused by a sub-human monster. The Shawn Hornbeck and Ben Ownsby case brought childhood sexual assault into main-stream media attention at a whole new level. The media got to report and ask all the questions surrounding the "hows and whys" behind one boy being in the criminal's custody for years. How did he get by? Why didn't he ask others for help? Was there any sexual abuse? Why didn't he get away when he had so many clear opportunities?

Those questions and the treatment of the case by the media sent me over an emotional cliff. I exploded with rage whenever and wherever I heard outrageous reports and statements. My behavior became very bad in situations that were even slightly stressful. I'd blow up at TSA people in airports if I thought that they took too long with carry-on baggage or if I thought they had "looked at me funny." I'd pick

fights with airport police and security forces all around the nation (I travel extensively for work).

People around me dismissed the behavior as "normal Rob stuff." "He's got some rage issues." The reality was that Little Robbie had been raped too; but I could never tell *anyone* about "that."

"Then [my wife Lorie] said something that just reached through my emotional defense wall and ripped the heart from my chest: 'Sarah said she had hiding places.'"

In November of 2006, I was asked to be the guest speaker at an annual Christian men's breakfast that would take place in my town on January 16th, 2007. I had done such things before—so why not? I've told my story of being saved by the blood of Jesus and living/thriving in business and life; told what it's like being a Christian businessman on the road, in ethical dilemmas, temptation, etc. *This* time, however, I immediately questioned why I would only tell people the "salvation-forward" version of my story. It was almost as if God spoke to me and said, "No, Rob, you are going to tell the story before and up to the date of your salvation." My reaction was, "No way, God. We can *never* go there, remember? We can *NEVER* tell anyone about that!" But despite all my objections, I was compelled in my heart to tell a generalized story of a troubled youth. I began to work on the speech.

In December of 2006, while spending yet another night in a hotel room, I watched an HBO-produced show that clearly was meant to marginalize Christianity in the USA. I watched it and was able to identify all the anti-Christian tricks the media uses to damage the credibility of men of faith. Nothing new, nothing earth shattering, until the field reporter of the documentary cornered a couple of Christian men and asked some very interesting questions. Reporter: "How often do you make love to your wife?" Man: "Every day." Reporter: "*Really*...that often???" Man: "Yes...every day...sometimes twice a day." The questioning went on to include more

discussion of spousal lovemaking. I was stunned at the answers these men gave. They went on to describe a married sex life that sounded perfect yet surreal to me. As a Christian and a man, I desperately wanted the same thing for my wife and me, but there was something from my past that made me severely dysfunctional sexually—and I could *never* tell anyone about "that." But I *could* (and did) pray to God and ask him to "*fix me*." The resulting conversation with God was a tug-o-war. I was requesting that he fix me, but let's not deal with "*that*"—OK? He'd respond, "If you want to be fixed you'll *have* to deal with 'that'." I maintained that I knew better than he and suggested

he get to work fixing me to be like the guys on HBO.

"I could no longer pretend that I had not endured a childhood full of sexual abuse at the hands of older boys of the neighborhood. I was a wreck. I went home and began to fall apart."

In January, I gave that speech to the Christian men's breakfast. Despite all my desire to "not go there," I alluded to how some "very bad things" had happened in my childhood. These very bad things led to my own *very* bad behavior as a kid. I described to the group

roughly *who* and *what* Jesus saved that day in July 1974.

After the speech, I was drained beyond belief. All my defenses were gone. I could no longer pretend that I had not endured a childhood full of sexual abuse at the hands of older boys of the neighborhood. I could no longer deny the subsequent years of self-abuse and hardcore acting out. I was a wreck. I went home and began to fall apart.

With a lot of painful reflection and after reading a few posts on Male-Survivor, I contacted a therapist whose specialization was working

with male survivors. In my first phone call with her, I told her about all this old stuff that had happened and I admitted that it was all coming to the forefront of my mind, that it was devastating me, that I was having flashbacks of horrific episodes of childhood sexual assault from older neighborhood boys and severe beatings from my psychotic father. It was as if a levee had broken in my mind; the resulting deluge was drowning me. I actually asked this therapist, "How do I push all this stuff back where it belongs?" She replied, "You don't. It's all right there before you now. You finally have to deal with this, Rob."

I drove home from the airport from another business trip and was a shaking crying mess of a man. I was trying to figure out how to tell my wife that there would be these therapist bills coming in—and that I'd take care of them. In reality, I ended up telling her everything. She heard the awful truth for the first time. This was exceptionally scary for me. For years, marriage counselors, pastors, and doctors had flat-out accused me of being a childhood sexual assault victim. It was the only explanation for my "issues." I had always vehemently denied that any such thing had occurred in my life. (I even successfully denied it with a surgeon when I was 11 years old, even though he had physical evidence of it.) I was fearful that my wife would feel betrayed and deceived by my life-long cover-up and lies.

She reacted with great support, but our year in hell was about to begin. Yet finally, someone had heard the truth. The silence was broken after 32 years of ignoring it, drinking it, drugging it into foul little pools behind the levee.

Finally, Little Robbie had a voice. The truth was out. ■

Moving On

My Story

By Steve Skowron

I feel truly humbled and privileged to be asked to write a brief story in the "Moving On" section of the MaleSurvivor Newsletter. I hope my story can touch at least one person's life. I would like to start out by saying, "YOU ARE WORTH IT!" and you may ask why would I start my story with this statement or exaltation? I believe that anyone who is reading this article, searching, in despair, ready to give up, has hope within themselves, their inner little boy or girl knowing in their heart that they are worth feeling and being loved by you and others. It has been the voice within me that has helped me get up in the morning when the day before has been so shitty that I wish I could medicate through alcohol and drugs feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, hopelessness, a sense I am going crazy, loneliness, despair, shame, sexual guilt, the lack of faith, inability to form healthy relationships, embarrassment, isolation, sexual confusion, sexual compulsion, an eating disorder, and on and on.

I was sexually abused by a priest when I was in 8th grade at St. Barnabas Church in Lancaster, New York. This abuse continued as I developed a relationship with the priest until age 23, when I began to seek therapy for anxiety. Therapy ultimately helped me break free of this sick individual. When I was 16 years old, I was also abused by a neighbor who was a school teacher. I learned through therapy that all the symptoms I began to manifest after I left my abuser, some of which I mentioned earlier, were a result of the abuse, and for me, an

aspect of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. I have seen multiple therapists, and each one provided me with what was needed at the time I was seeing them, and when I felt they could not take me further in my recovery, I found the courage to move on. *I was worth it.*

Several years ago, I was moving forward in my therapy and started to look online for resources on sexually abused males and found the MaleSurvivor website. I saw that they used a multi-disciplinary approach, and noting that Howard Fradkin was from Columbus, decided to make further inquiries because *I was worth it.* I attended my first weekend retreat—Weekend of Recovery number 11—in Utah, and it changed my life forever. I have since attended a level II and an advanced weekend for couples with

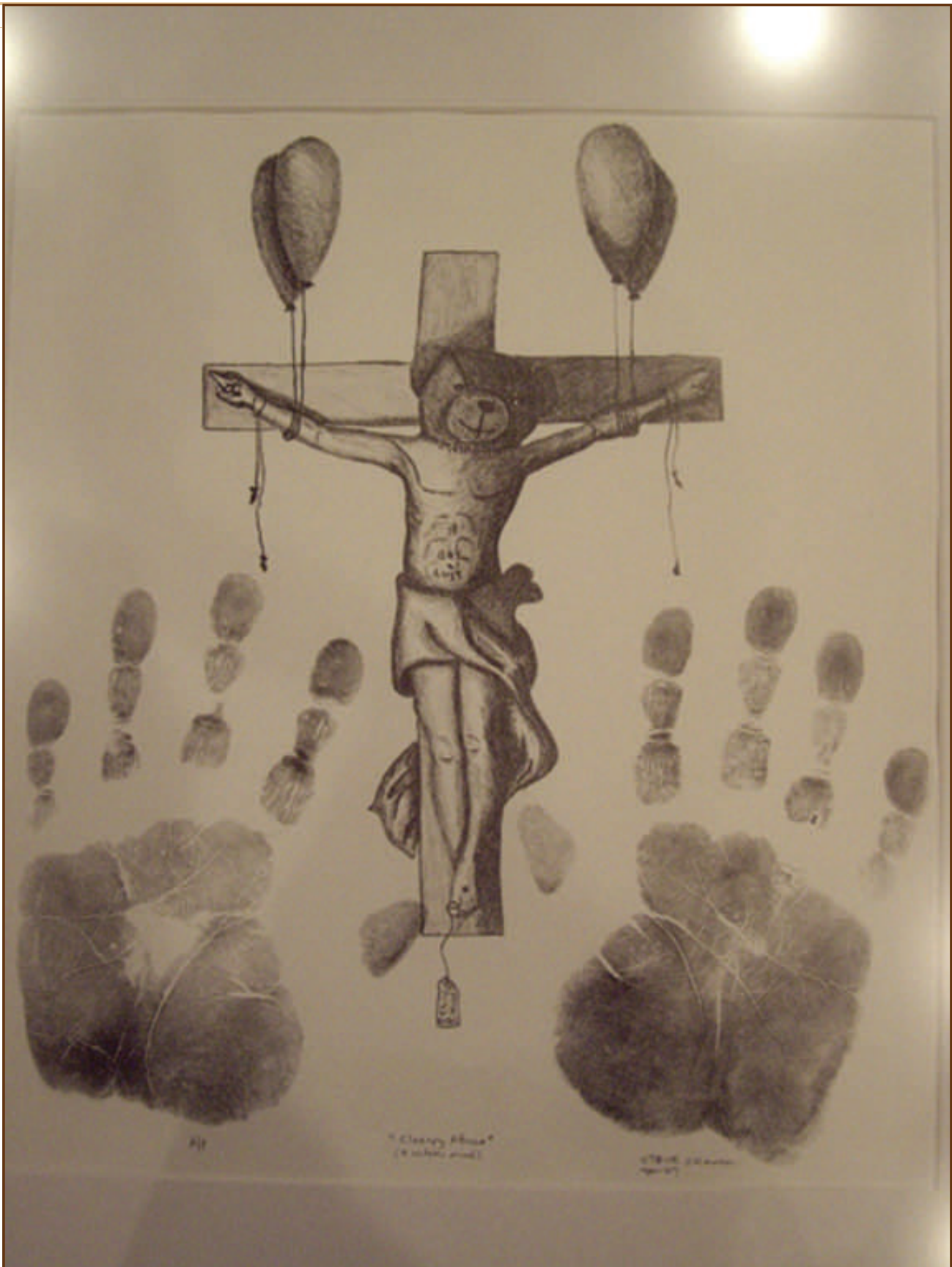
my partner of 7 years.

At 43 years old, I find that my abuse is apart of my history but does not impede me in ways it used to. I feel I can experience life on a level I couldn't before. I feel more in touch with my emotions and who I really am. I am pursuing a BA in studio art at California State University and wish to pursue a MFA when I graduate at the end of 2008. The image that accompanies this article (on page 17) is a work that I executed to represent the release from the silence of my abuse by a priest.

In closing, I hope you know that recovery is possible! *You are worth it!* With much gratitude to all those I have met at the WOR, I am truly honored to have listened to your stories and shared in your tears and laughter. Life is a mystery that I enjoy experiencing daily. ■



Double Happiness



Clergy Abuse—A Victim's Mind © 2008 Steve Skowron

Film Review

The Kite RunnerBy Bill Burmester, MA MFT

Before I launch into a review of this film, I'd like to say a few words about my approach. The genre of film reviewing has a familiar form: A critic sees a film probably only once, writes a quickly consumable combination of plot summary and engaging personal judgment, occasionally adds something about the making of the film, then moves on to the next one and his next review. This format makes sense for the writer who makes his living as a journalist-critic



Bill Burmester

and for the reader with limited time that he'd wisely rather spend watching a new movie than reading about it.

There are plenty of excellent and effective reviews of this sort already out there. What I hope to provide in this column is more of a "postview"—something to be read after seeing the movie, a commentary that is more about savoring, digesting, and drawing deeper meaning from a film experience already enjoyed (or suffered), and in this case, one focused on the psychologically complex experience and ongoing challenges of being a male survivor of sexual abuse.

One of the advantages of limiting our foreknowledge of a film is that much of the emotional impact of a first viewing can be lost if we are too prepared for it. What's more,

the kind of postview I have in mind here is likely to be full of spoilers, which is another reason to read it after you've seen the film. In compensation, I will list a traditional review or two at the outset and hope that what I have to offer will contribute to seeing the movie a second or third time, as an experience to be lived with, thought over, and felt through at different levels, over successive encounters, like any good work of art.

PART 1

Khaled Hosseini's first novel, *The Kite Runner*, became the year's third best selling work of fiction in the US when it appeared in 2005. As Roger Ebert remarks of Marc Forster's recently released film version, "How long has it been since you saw a movie that succeeds as pure story? That doesn't depend on stars, effects, or genres, but simply fascinates you with how it will turn out? Marc Forster's *The Kite Runner*, based on a much-loved novel, is a movie like that."

Some stories escape the real world through fantasy, some reflect and comment on it, and some resonate so deeply with basic human themes that they reenter the world to create dramas of their own. This film

has made its already hugely popular story one of the latter.

The Kite Runner is rooted in the boyhood friendship of Amir, the 12 year old son of a prominent Kabul businessman, and his younger but feistier friend, Hassan, who is also his servant and devoted body guard. When we first meet them, they inhabit Kabul a few years before the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Initially, their friendship reflects a traditional ideal of relations between people of different

rank when both sides acknowledge their interdependence and remain bound to one another by respect and loyalty, in spite of imbalances in power and rank. Although Amir and his father, Baba, belong to the ruling (Sunni) Pashtuns, and Hassan and his father, Ali, belong to the minority (Shia) Hazaras, their own fathers raised them like brothers, and Baba seeks to perpetuate this tradition of intimacy, to a fault, as we come to

understand fully only late in the story.

The young sons' relationship, unlike their fathers', becomes fraught with personal tensions under the pressure of ethnic persecution, and founders on Amir's resentment of



Directed by Marc Forster. Screenplay by David Benioff, based on the novel by Khaled Hosseini. Starring: Khalid Abdalla, Zekiria Ebrahimi, Ahmad Khan Mahmoodzada, Homayoun Ershadi, Nabi Tanha, Salam Yusoufzai, and Elham Ehsas.

his father's noble but corrosive efforts to equalize the boys' differences by favoring the friend and servant's courage over Amir's own more bookish, passive, and reticent temperament. As author Hosseini explains, Afghan culture is strongly patriarchal: A father's love must be earned, and Amir feels repeatedly bested in his father's eyes by his friend, though based on secrets he cannot be told, for the sake of honor and reputation.

The patriarchal focus of this epic is underscored by both boys' early loss of their mothers. Amir's mother died in childbirth, for which he carries an unassuaged guilt that pressures him to believe that his father hates him for "killing" her. Hassan's mother abandons him in order to live with a band of traveling performers, out of contempt for her crippled husband and his devotion to their newborn son. Amir's loss is only briefly alluded to and Hassan's only appears in the novel. Maternal loss and patriarchal pressure, interweaving the personal with the political in this story lead to a fateful betrayal between the two boys.

The theme of parental loss even jumps fictional boundaries with the casting of the principle young actors. Zekiria Ebrahimi, who plays Amir, lost his father to stray political gunfire within a week of being born, and is being raised by an uncle. And the father of Ahmad Khan Mahmoodzada, the boy who plays Hassan, was also shot and wounded in political conflict. Though he was not killed, seven other close relatives were. These realities underscore the atmosphere

in this film of maternal absence and masculinity wounded by warfare. And the actors, like their characters, live with the ongoing power that traumatic loss has to repeat itself.

I saw *The Kite Runner* for the first time only because the 2007 Mill Valley [California] Film Festival decided to add a late showing for those excluded from

its oversold premiere on the festival's closing night. The story on the street was that its depiction of the sexual abuse of boys in a culture likely to retaliate against them for being abused had caused controversy in Afghanistan, and an un-

anticipated turnout here. An NPR story about this in September noted that in Afghanistan, "a victim of such abuse would be so stigmatized that even playing the part carries risks." Paramount, the producing studio, had decided only under pressure to delay commercial release of the movie for six weeks, until the three primary pre-adolescent actors could finish out their

current school semester and be relocated to Dubai for safety and security, on their way, possibly, to the film's US premieres.

The news that child actors portraying victims of sexual abuse might themselves be targeted for persecution took me by surprise, and

gave me pause to reflect on my cultural naïveté. Friends more familiar with Near Eastern cultures explained to me that being a victim in countries like Afghanistan, especially a victim of sexual abuse, is

treated like a sin in itself, the shame of presumed weakness being more likely to evoke retaliation and violence than compassion and protection. Ultimately, this is only an undis-

guised version of the psychological discrimination that survivors of sexual abuse have traditionally faced everywhere, in particular male survivors.

Re-victimization of this sort is exactly the moral crime that Hosseini places at the heart of his novel and that Marc Forster, the film's Swiss director, could not excise without destroying the screenplay when asked to do so in post-production by a fearful Ahmad Jan Mahmoodzada—father of the boy playing the abused Hassan.

After retrieving a prize kite that Amir and Hassan win in an annual city-wide kite-flying competition, Hassan is cornered alone and raped by a local Pashtun bully for refusing to hand it over. Assef, a teenage, half-German, half-Pashtun "sociopath," idolizes Hitler and has taunted the two friends before as "faggots." He is abetted by two companions who overpower and hold Hassan down. When Hassan resists being robbed of his prize, protesting that he and Amir won the vanquished kite fairly, Assef lets him keep it as a reminder, he says,

(Continued on page 20)



Uncredited still from *The Kite Runner*

"The news that child actors portraying victims of sexual abuse might themselves be targeted for persecution took me by surprise, and gave me pause to reflect on my cultural naïveté."

The Kite Runner
(Continued from page 19)

of something he is about to do that Hassan will never forget. Even the actor who plays Hassan's father in the film was upset by the sexual abuse scene, and, along with other cast members lobbied for its removal. By Western standards, the scene is minimal enough to have garnered the film a PG-13 rating. I take up these cultural differences in the reception of the film in Part 2 of this review and focus here instead on the reverberations of the rape within the story of the film itself.

Amir, who secretly happens upon the rape scene just as it is unfolding, could have intervened (and in the novel claims he "almost" did), but the fear that prevents him from acting mushrooms into a betrayal that is not only painful to watch but that keeps compounding itself until Amir is also left with deep psychological and moral scars. He too is given something he will never forget. Hosseini's adult Amir opens the novel by telling us, "I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975," and the narrative that follows is his search for atonement and redemption for what he has become, carried out in part by the confessional and creative art of writing itself.

Though named for Hassan, who is the masterfully intuitive "kite-runner" of the title, both novel and film dwell more on the internal plight of Amir, in his role as secondarily traumatized friend. It is he, the privileged bystander, not Hassan, who writes the story of the rape, both in the sense of recording and perpetuating the violations it involves. It is not only Hassan's story of victimization, but Amir's too, not only to bear but to atone

for. The choice to deliver the story through his first-person narration (more obvious in the novel than the film, of course) focuses us on the profound relational trauma perpetrated on the sexual abuse victim's intimate others and on the relationship between victim and intimate witness, in ways that might be even less discernible in the witness than in the victim himself. By receiving the story through Amir, and therefore implicitly identifying with his experience of it, we are challenged by his choices to examine what we might do as bystanders, especially at his age. I think the implicit position the story puts us in is at the heart of its power and popularity: it gives us a way to contemplate the burden of guilt for "unforgivable" betrayals.

One of the deepest insights into the nature of sexual abuse, published in 1933 by Freud's late-life friend and victim, Sandor Ferenczi, is that traumatic anxiety, at its extreme, forces the victim to lose his sense of self, even to the point of becoming an instrument of the aggressor's will:

"... to divine each one of his desires and to gratify these," as Ferenczi, himself a survivor, put it. This is the same process that lies at the heart of the "Stockholm Syndrome," in which the terrorized victim becomes devoted to his persecutors. This situation was most

famously played out in the '70s by the privileged Patty Hearst in her servile relation to her kidnappers, her participation in their crimes,

and her ultimate punishment for them.

Where Hassan is physically overpowered and psychologically traumatized, Amir is morally vanquished. In the attempt to fight his own transgressive weakness, Amir only deepens it, mimicking Assef, the perpetrator, when he rejects and hurts Hassan for already being a victim. While Assef targets Hassan as a victim of de-humanizing ethnic persecution, Amir comes to represent his culture's rejection of him as a sexual victim. For us readers and film-goers, this portrayal condemns Amir, while morally elevating Hassan. Much popular commentary at sites like [the Internet Movie Database](#) (IMDb) lionize Hassan as a sacrificial victim, and extend this to Ahmad Khan who

plays him; few, if any, empathize with Amir as paralyzed and so defeated by his own betrayal that he paradoxically joins in the victimization of his friend.

As is often the case in film and fictional narrative, these two counterpoised characters can be seen to represent complementary sides of the same person: in this case the literal and the moral sides of the victim of sexual abuse. Hassan is physically raped, humiliated, shamed, yet ennobled. Amir is raped of his humanity by his own hand, saddled with intolerable

guilt, and tarnished by shame. The film amplifies this narrative splitting when it all but omits a detail made explicit in the novel: Before he is

"One of the deepest insights into the nature of sexual abuse, published in 1933 by Freud's late-life friend and victim, Sandor Ferenczi, is that traumatic anxiety, at its extreme, forces the victim to lose his sense of self, even to the point of becoming an instrument of the aggressor's will."

raped, Hassan strikes Assef in the head with a rock. The omission of this act of aggression makes it easier to empathize with Hassan as an innocent victim. His intent to protect himself (highlighted in the film) preserves our sense of his inherent courage and self worth, even while Amir describes the expression in his face as "the look of the lamb."

Amir's predictable cowardice, by contrast, casts him in with the executioners of the spirit. He acts out the side of the victim that can only maintain a sense of self and an illusion of choice by believing that the actions of the perpetrator were somehow his fault. Believing he should have or could have acted but simply failed to do so, when in fact he instinctively

froze in the face of traumatic threat, leads him to reassert the ability to act when it is too late, and in the opposite direction, against the victim. One might say that through his treatment of Hassan, he is fighting the victim in himself—a process that is pure tragedy because the externalized fight only deepens the internal defeat. The novel focuses us on this core dilemma of the witness, the dilemma of all of us who witness but do not act to protect.

It is Amir's life-story that the film follows. While ever ready to defend his friend against the bullies of the world, Hassan refuses to fight back when Amir later attempts to provoke him in a desperate bid for punishment to atone for his guilt. It is not that Hassan does not suffer the victimization of his rape, but that the novel and the film force us

to witness it through the guilt of his former friend. Unable to be his rescuer or his victim, Amir becomes Hassan's persecutor. And even when he succeeds in this persecution by getting Hassan and his father banished, it is Amir who we see as most deeply defeated.

Though the story makes it easy for us to condemn Amir for betraying

his devoted friend, such a judgment simply repeats the condemnation for cowardice by which Amir's father contributes to his son's frailty and predilection to cowardice. To the extent that we judge and reject Amir for failing to defend his friend, we become implicated in the father's contribution to the cowardice he condemns. The rape unleashes some of

the story's bitterest ironies. After pretending to Hassan that he has no clue he's just been violated, Amir returns home to be greeted with unprecedented and longed-for praise from Baba, his father, for the boys' kite-flying victory. But the internal defeat of having betrayed his friend completely robs Amir of the ability to accept and enjoy the paternal love and pride he so longs for. His guilt likewise makes torturous the lavish birthday party his proud father gives him, where, for instance, he is expected by his equally clueless father to greet and thank Assef for his birthday gift (a biography of Hitler) while watching Hassan reduced to serving his rapist refreshments. Nor, in his guilt, can Amir turn to his father for help without exposing and deepening his shame.

Unable to atone for his sins, Amir

reasserts himself by outdoing the one thing his father defines as the worst in the book, namely "theft." He steals Hassan's honor by making Hassan appear to be the thief. He exploits his friend to carry his own crime of betrayal. Hassan, without knowing it, has in fact stolen the admiration Amir needs from his father, and Amir can only attempt to steal the father back by vilifying Hassan in his eyes. When, instead, Baba forgives Hassan, almost immediately, for this worst of all sins, Amir is undone. He is in no position to understand the guilt that Baba himself is under pressure to atone for.

Amir regains his power from the paralyzing experience of witnessing trauma (as much a potential cause of PTSD as being the direct victim) by getting Hassan banished. When he first attempts to express the urge to get rid of Hassan, his father shames him with his fury. How one interprets the scene in which the already victimized Hassan and his father leave the household serves as a mirror of sorts.

There are (at least) two competing interpretations of the scene, not resolved in the narrative, that we are left to choose between:

1. Unable to admit to anyone what has happened to him, Hassan remains in a depressive, withdrawn state, leaving his father in the dark as to why he is being accused of stealing from his friend and master. Hassan submits to being accused, because he has already been defeated by the rape and succumbs to the reality of persecution by those more powerful and privileged than he. He may even have come to believe that any proud self-assertion on his part, even (or especially) out of devotion to another will inevitably be punished. Assef's

(Continued on page 22)

The Kite Runner
(Continued from page 21)

assault leaves him focused on survival. Hassan's father, Ali, as a point of honor and self-abnegation, or simply out of his own sense of shame, cannot bear to remain in the employ of the person he believes his son has wronged.

2. Having been told by his son about the rape, or only that he was persecuted in some more general way, Ali understands that his son's master and playmate has turned against him for being the victim. When Baba begs them to stay, Ali knows furthermore that Baba has framed his own son for the theft. (If Hassan has been able to speak about the rape to his father, he is equally likely to disclose his friend's betrayal to the only person he has left to trust.) Ali leaves the household out of pride and to protect his son from further intimate persecution and betrayal. Hassan, moreover, falsely admits to stealing Amir's watch and money not only because he is being faithful to his subordinate station, but because he accurately perceives Amir's vulnerability and can sense the terrible consequences for Amir of being exposed to his father as a liar and betrayer, a thief of the very qualities—personal honor and reputation—that his father personifies. The strength of Hassan's devotion survives Amir's betrayal. He puts his friend's well-being before his own, and protects him from paternal retribution, because he is inherently stronger than Amir and can bear to do so.

I alluded at the outset to this film's resonance with deep emotional themes and its power to reenact them, somewhat in the way that trauma has a way of restaging itself in a victim's life. In Part 2 of this review [to be published in the July

2008 issue of this newsletter –ed.], I take up the drama of feared retribution against the children who acted in *The Kite Runner*, and also consider the question lurking in all films that portray the sexual abuse of boys: whether the experience of acting in them is itself exploitive, abusive, or somehow damaging. And what does this mean for the need to break through ignorance and denial about the sexual abuse of boys and the powerful role films play in this social project? ■

My Impressions of the Conference
(Continued from page 5)

and the clear data he provides showing the link between "damaged" (my word not his) family environments and the increased incidence of abuse reinforces something I'd long suspected, personally experienced, but never had the courage to really think to be true. Here was statistical proof that I was not to blame for what happened to me.

Before I knew it, I was on my feet at the end of the lecture, and shaking his hand! I told him how important I felt his talk was. He looked at me with respect and we had a great exchange. I still can't believe it. This is what this conference is all about: Lay people like me, a perfect stranger who has no credentials as a therapist or a professor, get to meet the people who are working with us, putting all their best efforts into trying to understand the ways in which abuse has damaged us and into finding ways to help us heal. We can shake hands and talk about our experiences on opposite sides of the abuse question as equals, not as patient/therapist. It's one of the most empowering experiences I've had in my healing journey, and I look forward to staying in touch

with Dr. Gold.

Friday night, Martin Moran presented his one-man play entitled *The Tricky Part*. The play is deeply moving, wholly engaging, and his performance was utterly hypnotic. It starts out like a simple storytelling session; we're almost unaware that he's actually started the play as the house lights remain on when he comes out and starts speaking to us. But little by little, the whole theater becomes dark as we are all transported into his boyhood world of happiness and horror. My breathing became shallow and my pulse started rising as I began to relive feelings that I hadn't experienced in decades. By the end of the piece, I'm left drained and head home exhausted after a long, fulfilling, and ultimately challenging day.

The rest of the weekend was filled with fantastic workshops that ran the gamut from informational lectures to the latest research into the effects, scope, and effective treatment of CSA. I spent hours interacting with some of the most brilliant, caring, and compassionate people I have ever met. It's truly a wonder to me that even in the heart of New York City, a place sometimes known for its hard edge, this kind of experience is possible. I have continued to stay in touch with a number of the people I met at the conference, and I continue to use some of the lessons I learned over the weekend.

By reading this, I hope that some of you have been encouraged to consider participating in either a Weekend of Recovery or coming to attend the next conference (which is due to take place in New York again in the fall of 2009). I simply cannot overemphasize how tremendously healing and empowering an experience either of these occasions can be. ■

In the First Person

A Message of Hope

by Chris Anderson

I was asked by a couple of people to post the following. It started out as a reply to a question from "brill" here on the Male-Survivor boards and took on even greater meaning this weekend in Napa. I was honored to be allowed to share this gift with the guys at our final meeting this afternoon.

For those who were there at this Weekend of Recovery: Again, my deepest thanks for helping me to rediscover and reconnect with myself.

For those who weren't: Your loss! No seriously, I hope that you all get to experience a WOR. No words can ever do the experience justice.

I know the loneliness of which you speak. I spent over three decades feeling isolated and incapable of forming close relationships with anyone.

I hear that you want more. You need more. And you are right to hunger for more. It's a sign of something within you that wasn't killed by your abuser. It means that something whole and healthy has made it through the flames and destruction of your past and is trying to break through to the surface of your life. Don't scold it, don't scoff at it, and don't berate yourself for feeling unsatisfied. Nurture it. Tend to it. Listen to it. Love it.

It is you: the real you. Not the you that was forced into hiding for so long. Not the you that only allows

the world to see one half of who you are. Not the you that feels shut down, shut off, and shut out.

No. This is the real you.

This is the you that dreams of flying over snow capped mountains carried on the wings of a giant eagle, sunlight gleaming off your golden armor. This is the you that has a thousand songs trapped inside your heart yearning to come forth. This is the you that dares to believe, in spite of everything that's happened, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, in spite of every memory screaming its litany of horrors, that even though the world is at times a horrible f---g place filled with horrible f----g people who won't stop being so f----g horrible to one another—in spite of it all—believes that life is well worth living and worth living well

"Those of us who went through hell just to make it out of childhood didn't go through all that just so we could live a barely acceptable adulthood."

And it is. Life, for all the pain, is filled with even more joy. Those of us who went through hell just to make it out of childhood didn't go through all that just so we could live a barely acceptable adulthood. We made a down payment in blood, tears, and muffled cries on a future home filled with compassion, love, tenderness, and strength. But in order to collect what we purchased through our suffering, we must be willing to walk out of the shadows and into the sunlight. We must leave behind our abusers, our betrayers, and our hurtful demons; leave them to skulk in those shadows within which they sought to keep us entrapped.

An imprisoned man who steps out of the darkness of his cell into the bright light of day will at first shrink back from the awful intensity of the sun. The harsh glare of such an unfiltered light stings his cave-accustomed eyes. He blinks and flinches, he throws his arms up around his head and tries, reflexively, to encase himself in that darkness which was, for so very long, his only world. But the sun, ever present and ever patient, soon breaks through his terror. The man, still shivering and cold inside, slowly realizes that from atop his head a gentle warmth has begun to seep into him. The rays of light (just a moment ago so harsh and unforgiving) now feel soft and nurturing. He stops his shivering and hears the sound of a springtime breeze lightly rustling through some leaves on a nearby branch. The breeze carries to his nose a freshness, a richness, a wholly unfamiliar, yet wholly lovely scent. A birdsong, lilting and sweet, comes from somewhere off in the distance. Slowly, the man drops his weary arms, and turns toward the sun. He opens his eyes just the tiniest crack, still fearful of being blinded by its awesome power. And the sun, as though it had waited all eternity for this very moment, bathes him in a radiant, majestic brilliance.

My friends, we can choose to step into the sunlight at any time. But we must know beforehand that when we do, it will be painful at first. Soon, however, the pain will fade, and something new will wash over us. Our eyes will readjust to our new reality. And one day, we will behold ourselves bathed in splendor, a feeling that once we had never dared to dream. ■

Film Review

The Scandal on Notes

By Bill Farrand

As this year's Oscar season approached, I was reminded of my misgivings about the underlying message of last year's critically acclaimed *Notes on a Scandal*. While I agree that the film is superbly acted and an engrossing dramatic character study, my ambivalence is toward the treatment and minimization of the actual crime of sexual abuse of a minor male.

For those who did not see this film, it is based on the novel, *What Was She Thinking?* by Zöe Heller. The narrative is revealed through the diary entries of Barbara

Covet, played by Judi Dench, a spinsterish and bitter history teacher in a London public school. Cate Blanchett plays the role of Sheba Hart, the school's new art teacher, who has recently made a transition from struggling artist to teacher. She is married to a much older man, played by Bill Nighy, and has two children, one a teenage daughter and the other a younger child with Down syndrome.

Although vastly different in both age and temperament, the two are brought together when the novice, Sheba, has difficulty in maintaining discipline in her classroom, and

Barbara intervenes. Barbara takes Sheba under her wing, and they begin to spend time together both at work and socially. One gets the impression that Sheba's part of the relationship is driven by her appreciation for the mentorship as well as by pity of the lonely older woman's life. However, it soon becomes apparent that Barbara has

barbara attempts to use this information to coerce the deepening of the relationship between the two but ends up betraying Sheba by revealing the affair to a male teacher who has expressed interest in Sheba: "She likes younger men, *much* younger men." Of course the word gets all around, and with much ensuing drama, Sheba loses

her job, is sentenced to ten months in prison, and is thrown out of her house, leaving her nowhere to turn but to stay with Barbara. This is exactly the situation that Barbara has wanted, but Sheba is miserable. She then finds and reads the contents of Barbara's diary and realizes the depth of manipulation and deception that

has taken place.

It is at this point that the film takes a Hollywood turn away from the original plot line of the book, which is the primary issue I have with its treatment of sexual abuse. In the book, Sheba not only realizes that she has been manipulated and entangled into her relationship with Barbara, but also accepts this as a natural consequence of her behavior with the young student and resigns herself to the permanent reality of Barbara in her life. This is the end of the story. Sheba is destined to live out an unhappy life as penance for misdeeds. Barbara,



Uncredited still from *Notes on a Scandal*

more in mind than friendship, and she begins to use Sheba's feelings to her own advantage in an attempt to get closer. Meanwhile, Sheba has taken a fancy to a fifteen year old male student from a working class family who shows some talent as an artist.

The turning point of the film comes when Sheba begins a sexual relationship with the student in the course of her encouragement of his abilities. Barbara, whose obsession with Sheba has become apparent, spots them having sex through a classroom window—perhaps the inspiration for the novel's title. Bar-

also not to be pitied, has Sheba, but not really in the way that she wants her. Karma is served.

But this is not how Hollywood films with big stars like to end. There must be a victim, and in this case it unfortunately is the only person who committed a real crime and violation against a vulnerable and impressionable child. After reading the diary entries, Sheba gets to confront Barbara, revealing her as a repressed, sinister, and cunning

villain, and then returns to her family with this information as a bridge to making amends for her behavior and all that has happened. This turn completely overshadows—if not deflects—her culpability for her actions, making *her* the victim. It was not that *she* had molested a child, so much as that the obsessed and latent lesbian had used this information to ruin *her* life. This is not to say that Barbara is to be considered faultless or even sympathetic. The imbalance of power between Barbara and Sheba, and Sheba and the student mirror each other; she is doing to Sheba exactly what Sheba did to the student. The difference is

Sheba is an adult and could have made choices to stay clear of the enmeshment and inequity of motives upon which her relationship with Barbara was based.

The film does not pay a frame's worth of attention to the long-term effects sexual abuse may have had

on the young man. It does not explore the ways in which this violation of the power structure may affect him for his life, in all of his relationships, both in his personal and professional life. Instead, the abuse is treated as an irrelevant dramatic artifact.

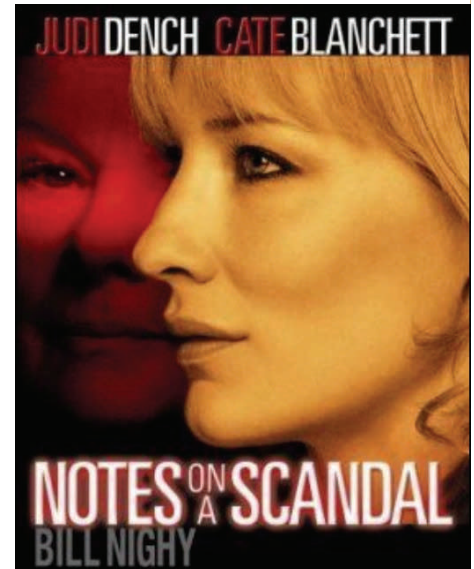
Whether it matters or not, this is a very different dynamic than my own experience with childhood sexual abuse—which is to say that I was able to appreciate the film on

an aesthetic level for the quality of the acting and cinematic elements without a knee-jerk reaction to the treatment of sexual abuse. But upon reflection of the underlying message—that the abuse of an adolescent male by an adult female is really not all that bad—I began to sense a roiling in my gut. I also began to consider the double standard. Would the film have been treated in the same way if Sheba had been a male teacher and the student a female? My guess is no. The male teacher would have been culpable for the transgression without question and that would have been the only acceptable out-

come. That goes double if the both the teacher and the student had been male.

So, I ask the filmmakers, the critics, the Academy, and the viewing public: What makes this acceptable? ■

"The film does not pay a frame's worth of attention to the long-term effects sexual abuse may have had on the young man. It does not explore the ways in which this violation of the power structure may affect him for his life, in all of his relationships, both in his personal and professional life. Instead, the abuse is treated as an irrelevant dramatic artifact."



Directed by Richard Eyre. Screenplay by Patrick Marbur, based on the novel, *What Was She Thinking?* by Zöe Heller. Starring: Kate Blanchette, Judi Dench, Tom Georgeson, and Bill Nighy.

Singer—Struve Interview
(Continued from page 1)

KS Sure!

JS I'm a little hazy on some of the earlier dates. It's great that you have that correspondence.



Peter Dimock

KS I found the very first letter here and I was thinking it was earlier than it was. In my head it was like '86 or maybe even '85 but it was actually February of '87.

JS You're kidding!

KS I'm not, I'm serious. "Dear Peter, I'm writing you as part of an informal network which seems to be developing through Fay Honey Knopp in Vermont involving professionals involved with male adult victims/survivors of

incest. Because of my contacts with her around adolescent sexual offenders and male AMACs (Adults Molested As Children, as they were referred to back then), we've been speaking and writing to each other

quite a bit recently." So that's when it started, well, hmm, I'm not sure when it started but this is the earliest physical evidence—a February 12th letter to Peter [Dimock].

JS What surprises me about that is that the first conference was in October of '88 and I can't believe that we would have moved from the letters into that conference that quickly, so I was thinking it started late '85, early '86.

KS [continues reading] "I took the liberty to send you a copy of your questionnaire 'Guidelines for Interviewing Male Victims and Characteristics Observed in Male Victims.' I was very pleased to see that something in writing was on target with this population and also felt validation in my observations but, best of all, several characteristics you noted were new to me but made sense with the men I'm working with. So, perhaps I should tell you about who I am and why I'm writing." This was the very first letter to Peter and I don't think there was anything that you and I were doing before that.

JS It may have been that Peter and I had started some contact and then you may have circled in a little bit after Peter and I had gotten some things going between us. The way I remember how it started was I found out about Peter and while I was visiting the Twin Cities, we arranged to get together in person over coffee. I remember we had a couple of meetings together and then I think it was after that the correspondence got rolling with you involved.

KS Yeah because I just found a letter dated January 26, 1987 from you to me. It says, "Dear Mr. Singer (both laugh), Early last fall I began a weekly therapy group for adult males who were sexually assaulted

as children. I've received numerous referrals and now have a waiting list of other adult male incest survivors who want to participate in a similar therapy group. Therefore, I'm planning to begin a second group in early 1987. I'm conducting this therapy group under the sponsorship of the Georgia Council on Child Abuse and receive regular supervision from GCCA personnel. I'm also director of social services of a large private psychiatric hospital ..." "This is the very first correspondence you did with me. There's no CC to anybody. It ends with "I very much appreciate your taking time to read this letter. I'm most grateful for your response." That was the start of it and you contacted me. Well actually you must have gotten my name from Honey.

JS I remember that Peter and I started contact either in that late summer or early fall of '86, and Peter was working on a book with Euan Bear that was going to be published by Safer Society Press. When Peter mentioned to Fay Honey Knopp—she was reviewing the manuscript—that he had met another guy who was working with males and that we had started corresponding, she said you really need to get Ken involved with what you guys are doing. I think that's when I reached out to see if you wanted to network and then we started the chain letter among the three of us.

KS Yeah, it shows what happens with memories especially when you're pushing 60 here. What you think happened isn't necessarily what actually happened because I was thinking that I'd connected with you guys first and that's what got me invited to the Juvenile Sex Offender Task Force, which eventually became part of NAPN [National Adolescent Perpetration Network]. I

think the first NAPN conference I was at was in '86, and I met Honey there. She was aware of my involvement and I was on a sub-committee that was dealing with male victimization issues. She told me that you guys were doing that. So the NAPN thing happened first and we connected through her.

JS So we're somewhere late '86 early '87, and somehow we all connected.

KS Right, that puts things into perspective for me, refreshes my memory.

MS Was Honey Knopp a major influence for all of you in selecting this path?

KS I had an interest in working with both teenagers and adults. I don't remember what year it was, but I'd gotten a call from a male survivor and I was learning from working with him. Then I was appointed to the task force, and because I had an interest in the area, they suggested I do the committee focusing on the male victimization aspect. From there, the three of us were doing peer supervision by letter. We used audio cassettes as well.

JS Tell me if you want to know anything about my background prior to '86. I'll be glad to share.

MS Well, this is a good time to share. Go ahead.

JS Well, just real briefly: In 1976, I got a job working with Child Protective Services. I'd just moved to Atlanta and I worked in that job for 4½ years. Just by circumstance, I was in the emergency services unit which is the one that got the initial complaints and calls, and we had to go out and do the initial investigation and walk it all the way through the court procedure. Pri-

marily I was assigned most of the boys who were being sexually abused. So that was my introduction and after that I went on and started working for a residential treatment facility and I was a social worker for the boys, most of whom had been sexually abused. I went on to work at a couple of psychiatric hospitals and started working with the staff there assessing males. Parallel to that was an agency called the Georgia Council on Child Abuse that started a program offering groups for female survivors. A couple of colleagues were supervising the clinicians who were volunteering to do groups, and I challenged why there weren't any groups for males. One thing led to another and I was setting up the male part of the program. At that point, I was totally winging it based on my experience because there was no training. I happened to bump into Fay Honey Knopp's name, what she was doing, which is when I reached out and said, "Can you help?" Somehow, that's where the linkup with Peter and Ken came. Like Ken was saying, all of us were reaching out to get some help to see if we were on the right track, doing the right thing. I think all of us were isolated in what we were doing and realized there was a lot more going on out there than any of us knew about.

MS As part of background for you and Ken, is it fair to say that you, Jim, work almost exclusively with survivors and their families, and Ken, you work with offenders as well as survivors?

KS I went to grad school in '75 and I graduated in '77. I was appointed to be a supervisor of a new unit—I was working for Child Protective Services in New Jersey—that was supposed to be taking on the difficult cases. Lo and behold the entire office dumped all their

incest cases on us, so in 1978, we renamed the unit the Incest Counseling Unit. We got training from Alexander Zaphiris from the American Humane Association, probably in '78, and started the unit working with offenders and victims both male and female and had as many as six groups running simultaneously on Wednesday night. I got appointed to the task force which was set up in '86, but at that point, I was done with CPS. They had asked me to set up a residential treatment program for juveniles who had committed sexual offenses. There was a court order by a judge in one of the New Jersey counties that had two kids who were unrelated to each other as far as offenses, and the judge ordered CPS and Juvenile Corrections to pay for the kids to go out to one of nine programs that existed around the country. That's where I first got involved with Fay Honey Knopp because she had compiled her first book, which described the nine programs. It may still be available from Safer Society but it's pretty old by this point. Eventually, I got invited to be on the task force and we had the meeting in Keystone, Colorado in '86. Every year we'd get together and work on what became the preliminary report for the Task Force on Juvenile Sexual Offending. In '93, it became the final version that's still being used by the field. Still being cited. So that's my background.

MS Before I get to Fay Honey Knopp whom I'd like to know much more about because she seems a person of almost mythical stature...

KS Yep.

JS Right!

MS ...Ken, I note that you're Executive Director of the New Jersey

(Continued on page 28)

Singer—Struve Interview
(Continued from page 27)

branch of the [Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers](#) [ATSA] and as I understand it this organization was either founded by Robert Longo or he was one of...

KS He was one of the founders. There's a certain amount of—I don't know if it's controversy—over who founded, but essentially what ATSA was before it became ATSA was a group of people in Oregon who would meet at lunch time at Oregon State Hospital. Rob was one of the original people along with probably about four or five others, and they started something that was called—it was something like ATSA—but it was called Association for the Behavioral Treatment of Sexual Abusers that eventually became the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers. So in a way, Rob was instrumental in getting things started, and depending on whom you talk to, he gets partial credit or major credit. Honey was involved with them peripherally, but she was really the founder of NAPN, the National Adolescent Perpetrator Network. That was running from about '85—Gail Ryan in Colorado is still the director of that organization—and Honey was a consultant to that group. That was bringing together people who worked with adolescent offenders, and within that group we had a little sub group of people that worked on male victimization issues.

MS Rob Longo succeeded Honey Knopp at Safer Society...

KS Right, at the Press.

MS ...then went on to found ATSA. Would you say that you gathered some of your inspiration for your career direction from Rob?

KS Rob is a friend and certainly has been a real positive inspiration for me over the years. Honey was my mentor in terms of her philosophy, which was that everyone deserves treatment, and if you can remove the stigma and the need to demonize them, that they are people who are also hurting. They deserve to be treated. In 1964, she started a prison ministry called

Prison Research Education Action Project (PREAP), working with all kinds of criminals in prisons, but she saw that people who had committed sexual offenses weren't getting any services.

From that, the [Safer Society](#) Project, which evolved from PREAP, published a series of workbooks written by Rob Longo and Lauren Bays that enabled people who were in prison and who had committed sexual offenses to work on treatment issues even if they didn't have

real treatment in prison. She felt that it was better to give people treatment while they were in prison so hopefully they wouldn't be coming out more embittered and committing more sexual offenses.

MS Now let's talk about Honey Knopp. I want to know what she was like as a person. I guess that by the time the two of you and others like Mike Lew got to know her, she was already in late middle age or early elderly years.

KS Prior to her death in 1995, Honey was like the grandmother—I mean we were all much younger then—or mother figure. Most people on the task force were in their 30s and early 40s, and she was the

inspiration and the driving force for us philosophically. She had a profound influence on the juvenile sex offender movement as well as male survivor movement.

JS I actually didn't have a whole lot of contact with Honey beyond that initial correspondence in which we had a couple of exchanges. I met her once or twice briefly at the

conferences, but other than that, my direct contact with her was pretty minimal. I think Peter worked with her while doing the book that he and Euan Bear co-authored, and Ken worked with her a lot through his work, but my overlap with her was minimal. She was a larger than life and very iconic, very inspirational.

KS After she died, both NAPN and NOMSV [National Organization on Male Sexual Victimization, now MaleSurvivor] had a Fay Honey

Knopp award that was given to people who exemplified her philosophy and her drive. I feel very pleased that I was given the Knopp award a few years ago by both NAPN and MaleSurvivor. They are very significant honors. I tried to do what she was striving for.

MS I'd like to get back to Honey and Rob's philosophy for a bit. As I understand it, one of Honey's big drives—if I can use that word—was to keep sexual offenders out of prison as much as possible and into treatment programs, because, in her view and Rob Longo's view, prisons don't do anything to help offenders with their problems and

"Honey was my mentor in terms of her philosophy, which was that everyone deserves treatment, and if you can remove the stigma and the need to demonize them, that they are people who are also hurting. They deserve to be treated."

possibly the road back to some reasonable health.

KS A little clarification: I don't think that Rob or Honey would have said that some people or that nobody deserves to be in prison. Honey's philosophy was that our inability to treat or cure sexual offenders was not about our failures as much as we haven't figured out the best way to reach them. She believed that nobody is unsalvageable, although I think that Rob would agree that certain individuals in prison—because of the kind of crime they committed—need to be off the streets for the protection of others, but that they do deserve to be treated because locking somebody up for X number of years is not going to change their behaviors, particularly if they're treated with disrespect. The philosophy of the sex offender treatment field when it first started—going back about 25, close to 30 years—was borrowed from the domestic violence and drug and alcohol treatment fields. Back 30 years ago, the predominant substance abuse treatment was breaking somebody down and making them hit rock bottom and then building them back up. Unfortunately, there still are a few programs, not too many, that use what we call the "shame and blame" approach as opposed to using more positive motivators.

JS Another thing that will help with the historical background that is directly relevant to NOMSV: Most

of the information and research on male survivors until the mid- to later part of the '80s was done on the prison population—pedophiles, offenders—so a lot of the literature and research was skewed in the direction of most if not all sexual offenders who had been sexually abused. Therefore, it started to float around that men who had been sexually abused are at real high risk of becoming offenders. By the mid- to late '80s, some people began asking why some people who were sexually abused will go on to offend and some don't. Most of the treatment services were geared toward incarceration or offending, so that's where we pick up with the start of the NOMSV

"Most of the treatment services were geared toward incarceration or offending, so that's where we pick up with the start of the NOMSV movement. Some of us were raising the issue that we need to start addressing non-offending male survivors as a separate entity, as a separate population."

movement. Some of us were raising the issue that we need to start addressing *non-offending* male survivors as a separate entity, as a separate population. That was a little bit different that the prevailing trend in the field at the time. When Peter, Ken, and I were beginning our dialog with our correspondents, one of the things we realized was that there was no place ready to bring people together to address and talk about issues of male survivors. The treatment for offenders had conferences and workshops going, but

there was no audience for us. We started out talking about our own experience of isolation; what if we presented a forum or conference and invited people working with survivors to come together? There was no other research or discussion to address the dynamics of survi-

vors. People could talk fluently and proficiently about offenders but not much about pure survivors. All three of us said, Let's look at our own communities to see if we can find some way to make something happen and jump on board and support it. The Minnesota Department of Corrections was doing a conference on offenders at a hotel near the university, and they readily agreed to do a second day of the conference that would address survivor issues. So day one was offenders and day two was survivors. That was the first time that a lot of us got together to actually have a whole series of workshops, presentations, and meetings. Do you remember, Ken, how many people showed up? Seemed like there were maybe 50 or 75?

KS That sounds about right. I went to the conference in Minnesota with the idea that I wanted to go to that piggy-back conference about survivors. I went with a colleague who was interested in working with offenders.

JS That was in October of 1988. Peter and I—Ken, I think you were involved and Larry Morris from Tucson was there—were adamant about saying we need to have a conference that's not intertwined with offenders. So I stuck my neck out and said I will agree to organize and host a conference in Atlanta on the following October on the basis that it's only for survivor issues, workshops, and programs, and we won't have any workshops or sessions addressing offenders. It was like jumping off a cliff at the time because we had no idea about financial backing. So I went traipsing back to Atlanta and organized the second conference, which was in '89. I got three or four psychiatric hospitals that were competitors with one another and usually did

(Continued on page 30)

Singer—Struve Interview
(Continued from page 29)

nothing cooperative to agree to equally split the financing for the three-day conference. There was an Institute that preceded the conference. Mike Lew, Peter Dimock, and I were the presenters for the Institute. This was then followed by a two-day conference, and we had 450 people show up for that.

KS Was Columbus right after Atlanta?

JS No. We were off and running and none of us quite knew what we were doing. Larry Morris said, Let me try a conference in Tucson. By that point, enough of us were beginning to communicate and were supporting Larry in setting that up that we began to function as an informal advisory board—no elections, nothing like that. I think at that point—Ken, your job or whatever didn't allow you or you didn't have the time so you didn't get involved—it was Peter Dimock, Larry Morris, Howard Fradkin, Don Mann from Portland, and me. We had the 1990 conference in Tucson. We started having administrative meetings accompanying the conference, and if I remember correctly, it was at that meeting that Mary Froning from Washington, D.C. and Eugene Porter from Berkeley joined. We had a seven member advisory board. Don Mann said he would do the next conference, but we really didn't have the organizational structure for it, so we decided to wait two years. He did the Portland conference in 1992.

KS I was at Tucson and Portland but didn't get involved with the administrative thing at that point.

JS Right, and it was somewhere between Tucson and Portland that the six or seven of us started say-

ing, Let's have meetings two or three times a year, so we all started paying the cost ourselves of doing it. I started hosting at my house in Atlanta because it was big enough for us to meet for three or four days to do planning and see how we could move the cause and move the male survivors along. We pooled our finances and we all paid the same amount no matter how much we traveled, so we had a communal body and did everything by consensus.

JS And then after Portland, Mary Froning volunteered to do one in Washington, D.C. That conference happened in '94.

KS Who did Columbus?

JS By 1994, it was getting administratively cumbersome because we had no elected body; none of us were on the advisory board, nor were we working in any official capacity. We were beginning to be asked, Is this an organization for professionals? Is it an organization for survivors? Is it for both? What are the issues about gay and straight? It was getting complicated, so that's when Howard Fradkin said, Let's have a constitutional convening conference in Columbus. We set that up for the following year, the fall of 1995. At that meeting, we did some workshops and programming, but the main focus was to see if we could make a decision to write a constitution and by-laws and formalize as an organization, elect an official Board of Directors and president. That's when NOMSV officially became an organization.

KS I was at that one, and what stands out most in my mind—I think they were mostly Canadians or led by a Canadian guy—they were saying this has to be a survivor organization, it's not about professionals. There seemed to be a survivor/professional split—at least that was my take on it.

JS That may have been Don Wright, I'm not sure. He came on the Board later because we were starting to get Canadians involved by that point. Randy Fitzgerald—who is now Randy Martinez—became involved with the advisory board. But, yeah, that was the major tension in Columbus. We had decided that NOMSV would not be an organization addressing offender issues; we'd be strictly an organization for survivors

because that's where we felt the vacuum and the need were. But we couldn't get consensus or clarity on the professional/lay split. We were leaning more towards making NOMSV for professionals. Finally, we decided to be a joint organization of survivors and professionals. We did incorporate, we did become NOMSV, and the following year, in '96, we had our first conference under the name NOMSV, and that was also in Columbus. And then the following year, '97, Eugene Porter took the baton and we had a conference in Orinda, California. Our attendance dropped significantly at that point.

KS That was, I think, one of the only ones I ever missed.

*“Howard Fradkin said,
Let's have a
constitutional convening
conference in Columbus.
We set that up for the
following year, the fall
of 1995. That's when
NOMSV officially
became an
organization.”*

JS Our attendance really dropped so there was a big break at that point in terms of figuring out what to do organizationally and financially. I know that's the point I rotated off the Board and Don Wright and some other people came on, and then Don took the ball and organized the next conference in Vancouver. I believe that was in 1999.

KS Yeah, that's correct.

JS Then we decided that it was better to do conferences every two years because it was getting somewhat awkward to do them annually. There was some idea that conferences should rotate between West Coast and East Coast, so New York volunteered to do it in October 2001, right after the attack on the World Trade Center. Peter Dimock volunteered to do an anniversary conference in Minnesota in 2003. That would have been the fifteenth year of us as an entity doing these gatherings and conferences. At that point there was a lot of confusion—which is where Peter dropped out—around the financing and the conference and how some of the decisions were made. I think that may have been the first conference where the organizer was not a Board member. It exposed the awkwardness of that. So they took a break, and the next conference wasn't until this past fall in 2007, in New York. John Jay College had stepped forward to say they would help be a sponsor. A major weakness has been not having a solid and regular financial backer. Ken, you may know what the plan is for the next sequence and when another gathering will be.

KS I think the decision was made for John Jay College to host it every two years, so it would have more of a permanent basis: The

funding was going to be more predictable, the site was going to be predictable, and so forth. It might also be helpful to talk about the leadership. Was Randy the first president or was it Howard?

JS I believe that when we incorporated in '95, Randy was elected the first president. What I remember is that Randy was president and then Howard, and then Michelangelo Castellano. Making decisions by consensus was getting to be an issue within the Board, so part what was changed at the Columbus constitutional conference was to stop doing everything by consensus. Up until that point, we'd been doing everything very informally, trying to get the sense of where people were, using our best judgment, proceeding along, but a lot of the decision making was structured around the best judgment of people who were on the advisory board. After '95, we started having some mechanisms like Murray Shane's newsletter—and I think our website came into being somewhere around there—where we could start getting more direct feedback from members. The Board was now elected and was accountable to the membership in a whole different way.

KS I came on the Board in '95, so Randy was the first president that I knew there. Were you on the Board at that point, Jim, in '95?

JS That's when I dropped off. I'd been involved since '88 and decided to let some other people step in to do some of the work.

KS When I came on the Board, I found the consensus process to be totally intolerable because it would take hours to make even a simple decision. The president's term was one year. Randy, Howard, and Michelangelo Castellano were one

year presidents, and not a whole lot got done. I was asked to run for president, which I did with the understanding it was going to be a one year term. However, they asked me to be the first two-year president because the argument was, #1 that the consensus process was too slow and decisions were not getting made, and #2, given the infrequency of the meetings we were having—we were just starting to get online and beginning to have email correspondence among the Board members—you could get stuff done between the conferences but it was a very tedious process with all the emails to come to a decision. So we went to a two-year presidency. I became what I prefer to call a benevolent dictator and said that we're here to serve a purpose, we're here to serve a community, and we're not doing it with this consensus model, we need to exhibit leadership. I was president from '99 to 2001 and was on the committee for the 2001 conference in New York. Richard Gardiner took over as the next two-year president and then Fred Tolson, but Fred lasted about a year and a half and then just bailed. Murray Shane took over, and now Curtis St. John is president. So that's the history of the leadership.

JS Decision making by consensus worked until the constitutional conference in Columbus because we were building a sense of community. We didn't have a lot of organizational structure to be governing or implementing. We were trying to get the movement inspired and off the ground. Whatever decisions we did make were done when we were together, and almost all of our meetings were where we would just camp out in the same house together and cook and do the dishes and make decisions, and so it was a

(Continued on page 32)

Singer—Struve Interview
(Continued from page 31)

very communal environment. Between the meetings, we were phone calling as needed, and whoever was organizing the conference was doing that somewhat independently. Then in 1995—the year of incorporation—it became much more about decisions that had to get made, organization that had to be operational, and I think for a lot of people, consensus became less productive. I think that making decisions by consensus early on was very helpful in terms of pulling people together and building a sense of “groupness” and community.

KS Yeah, I think the consensus model was useful when it was still a movement but I think NOMSV became an organization when we came up with the name, which I remember (laughing) we achieved through consensus, and that took hours and hours.

JS Exactly. We moved into adolescence—the original seven of us—and then Randy came aboard. I think the tricky part has been the issue of boundaries because there hasn’t been as clear a place for people who are professionals to do their own survivor work with confidentiality through the conference mechanism—maybe you’re in a workshop with your own clients—and that’s gotten even more complicated since the Weekends of Recovery, which started right before the New York conference in 2001. Anybody who’s on the facilitator team and is a survivor risks being in workshops with guys who have been in Weekends with us. Now that we’re an organization for both professionals and survivors, where are the appropriate boundaries for when and how people mix and mingle, and where do professionals

get the help and support that they need in a confidential way? This is an ongoing issue the organization will have to keep struggling with.

KS The organization has historically been made up of survivors, professionals who are survivors, and professionals who are not survivors but are working with them.

JS In the early years, through the first six conferences, everybody in leadership was a survivor. The roots are really strongly grounded in the fact that it was never a group of professionals coming in and trying to set up an organization for survivors. It was really survivors who were also professionals who were trying to pioneer and lead something that would be relevant.

MS Before you talk about where you think the organization is headed, are any other items you’d like to add to the history?

JS I want Peter Dimock to be acknowledged as one of the moving forces for why MaleSurvivor exists. He contributed tons of time and energy. Whatever Peter’s decision was about choosing to step aside, nothing should detract from his status as an historical figure who has made a great contribution to MaleSurvivor.

KS I would agree with what you’re saying. Regardless of what happened after Minnesota in 2003, Peter did make a very significant contribution to the development of this organization.

MS OK, with that in mind and given the inspirational history of the organization’s founding and early years, what do you see for the immediate and long term future of MaleSurvivor?

JS I think our biggest weakness is not understanding why MaleSurvivor or the male survivor movement hasn’t had the same trajectory as the female survivor movement. What is it we’re doing that’s not allowing us to take off? After all these years, we’re still staying way in the shadows, we’re still a fledgling, struggling organization, and many people still don’t have much awareness of male survivors. I’m curious for us to figure out how we can change that. How is it that we’ve not been able

to identify any high profile public figures to be with us and join us? A number of high profile females have significantly influenced the women’s movement by stepping forward and aligning themselves with organizations that have made female sexual abuse a very prominent mainstream issue. I don’t know if it’s our maleness or if the issue is still more taboo. I hope that’s something we can struggle with. How do we get some stabilizing of grants, finances, and gifts so that we can move beyond fledgling and really begin to do some social change and politically active stuff to address male survivor issues, and then continue everything else that we’re already doing with the Weekends, conferences, the newsletter, and the website?

KS When I was on the Board of Fred Tolson’s organization, which is

“I want Peter Dimock to be acknowledged as one of the moving forces for why MaleSurvivor exists. He contributed tons of time and energy ... [and] made a great contribution.”

called MALE—Men Assisting, Leading and Educating—I arranged through the NOMSV Board to bring in MALE because a lot of the work that we were doing with MALE was what NOMSV was also attempting to do. Fred's website was much better than NOMSV's in the early days, so bringing Fred in helped move the website into 21st century. I think the major problem I've seen—being involved first with the website and chat rooms and discussion board on MALE and then later on NOMSV for the past 10 or 11 years—has been that a lot of survivors find the site, get really enthusiastic, and then either disappear or burn out. You see constant turnover in the people who post on the MS discussion board. Over 5,000 people have registered for the discussion board but only a few hundred are still around, checking in once in awhile. You've got some people who are very, very heavy posters and use the website as a means of their own healing, and we assume that some of them get better and say this problem is now behind me and they move on with their lives, while other people fall by the wayside because the effects of the abuse have just been overwhelming and being around the website and around so many other people who are hurting has really been difficult for them. Over the years, we've tried to promote healthy living, which is why there's a forum on the discussion board dealing with wellness. It's not just about people's pain and people's hurt and people's lives that are going downhill and that are going nowhere but it's also about healing and growth. I think that people get what they can from the website, and the website is really the portal that brings new members in. I agree with what Jim is saying in terms of fundraising and grant writing—Jim, are you aware of

what Jim Hopper's been doing with this [1-in-6 website](#)?

JS Yes.

KS Well, that's an example. They have [Greg LeMond](#) on their advisory board, a bicycle racer who is a survivor, and he pledged \$50,000. They're doing something that we're not doing in terms of tapping into money and celebrities or interest. They're still in their infancy and it's headed by a survivor on the west coast who is very enthusiastic. Now, will this guy still be running at 110 miles an hour two years from now or a year from now, I don't know, but what we've seen over the years is that people get really enthusiastic and psyched up and volunteer to do all kinds of stuff and they get burned out. So I'm not sure how you promote that or prevent burn-out with people.

JS I hope we can find someone like Greg LeMond—with all the possibilities—because I think we need that legitimacy and infusion of financial help. We've got all the structure after all these years, and there are a lot of people like you, me, Howard, and others who've been around forever and aren't burned out, so we've got the possibility of going to that next stage of flying, I hope.

KS I think it has a lot to do with the Board composition. I'm on three boards and the story is the same with all of them. You have a couple people who do a tremendous amount of work and you've got a lot of people who are just Board members in name only. Curtis said to me about a month or two ago, We want to expand the Board because we've got fourteen people now who want to be on the Board. And I said, Well, did you ask a question like why do you want to be on the Board? And what do you

have to bring to it? I'm on the Board of [Stop it Now](#), a prevention organization directed towards offenders and people who might offend, and I'm on a committee that is dealing with recruiting Board members. They have a very different process than MaleSurvivor's. People really have to want to be on the Board and have to have some kind of skill or knowledge or resource base that will benefit the organization. I think what has happened historically with the MS and NOMSV Boards is that people say, Yeah, I want to do this, and get burned out or don't have the horses to run with it. So, it's usually one or two or three people that are doing all the work and they wind up burning out too.

JS We have an impoverished model where we'll take anybody who will just be willing to say, I'll do it, and that's really why I'm impressed with the WOR facilitator team. That's a very stable, dedicated group. I hope that the Board will get to that same level where it's composed of people that are really solid, really committed, and really stable. Like the facilitator team, there are a number of us who have been there for a long, long time. So, yeah I think the Board needs to figure out how to move from that desperation model and be more selective.

KS I think the communication from the Board to the membership really needs to be improved.

JS Yes.

KS For example, when there's a Board meeting, the minutes should be posted on the website and yet they never have been.

JS I agree. We don't know what's going on.. ■



Newsletter Staff

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Richard Cleverly, WOR #2 and WOR #9
newsletter-editor@malesurvivor.org

GRAPHIC DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Richard Cleverly

ADVISOR AND TEAM LIAISON

Dale English, MS CAS

USA

MaleSurvivor

PMB 103

5505 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20015-2601

1-800-738-4181

Canada

MaleSurvivor

c/o BCSMSSA

1252 Burrard St., #202

Vancouver, B. C.

V6Z 1Z1

MaleSurvivor

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT	Curtis St. John
SECRETARY	[vacant]
TREASURER	Ken Followell

WEEKENDS OF RECOVERY TEAM

Lee Beckstead, PhD	Donald E. Laufersweiler, MS LICDC LPCC
Bill Burmester, MA MFT	NBCCH
Joanna Colrain, LPC CGP	Paul Linden, PhD
John Crowe, LMHC CRC BCSA	Lynne MacDonell, BA CADIC CHt
Dale English, MS CAS	Ernesto Mujica, PhD
Howard Fradkin, PhD LICDC	Mikele Rauch, LMFT
Sandi Forti, PhD	Hildie Rempel-Jacyk BSW MA
Bill Jacyk, MD FRCP (Canada)	Jim Struve, LCSW

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ann Boyer, MD	Daniel Blausey, MA ATR-BC LCAT
Ken Followell	Howard Milton
Jorge Ramirez, PhD	Joe Romano, CPA
Murray Schane, MD	Marc Spindelman
Curtis St. John	Karen Terry
Stephen Vincent	Rommell Washington