

ASCA News • June 2002

**From the Desk of
George J. Bilotta, Ph.D.**

A Concluding Note

In 1990, Norma Morris and I began dreaming and articulating the initial parameters outlining an organization dedicated to the healing process of adult survivors of childhood abuse. Through Norma's philanthropic generosity and foresight, THE MORRIS CENTER began taking shape and form. We incorporated originally under the name, Adult Survivors of Incest Foundation. The name was changed to the NORMA J. MORRIS CENTER for healing from child abuse in 1993 to express both our corporate expansion and to include physical and emotional abuse, along with sexual childhood abuse. In addition, the Board of Directors took that opportunity to honor Norma by deciding to name the organization after her.

I assumed the helm as Executive Director until 2001. After my relocation from California to Massachusetts in 2000, I shifted my position from Executive Director to consultant. In July 2002 I will shift again from a paid consultant's position to a volunteer's position. I will assume the designation of historian as a result of my longevity and experience within THE MORRIS CENTER. My new assignment will be informal rather than formal. I will continue to be available to the Board as they assume more and more of the leadership and daily tasks that previously occupied my desk.

During the past two years the Board has developed and grown in stature and competency. The Board is lead by an industrious president, Jessy Keiser. Jessy has a history almost as long as I with THE MORRIS CENTER. She is assisted by Board members Dianne Whitney, Bob Roberts, Lane Arye, David Vandever and Vlado Bradbury. As the Board continues to refine directions for ASCA and other initiatives by THE MORRIS CENTER, they will be calling upon your assistance.

Norma and I have also decided that at this juncture of the organization's evolving history it seemed an appropriate time to shift the financial

responsibilities of the organization to members of the adult survivor community. Norma has been the primary financial support for THE MORRIS CENTER since its inception some 12 years ago. If the organization is to have a long history similar to AA and other self-help programs, the membership will need to come forward with financial support. The present financial system is sound. THE MORRIS CENTER has no debt. Sufficient working capital is in the bank to cover all existing commitments for the next financial year that begins July 1, 2002.

Over the past decade plus, Norma has donated over a million dollars. I am aware of no other person that has been more compassionate and generous, committed and visionary to the cause of adult survivors of childhood abuse than Norma. As an organization we have truly been blessed and honored by Norma's dedication to healing within the adult survivor community.

As I shift to an informal working relationship within THE MORRIS CENTER I tend to review the past 12 years with fond memory. If asked what I value most about the past 12 years it would be our ongoing focus on being innovative, holistic, and cutting edged in our offerings to the adult survivor community. In the early 90s we provided group psychotherapy when it was difficult to find a psychotherapy group for adult survivors of childhood abuse. We replaced group psychotherapy and our entire psychotherapy program with ASCA beginning in 1994. We have honed the ASCA program with a cutting edge touch to recovery from childhood abuse. ASCA has always been in a process of evolution and change. I hope that ASCA will continue to evolve as we grow in experience and awareness of the progressive ways to offer a self-help program to survivors of childhood abuse.

Some of the highlights of the past 12 years include 6 survivor conferences in San Francisco, San Diego and Santa Rosa, 3 international Whispers art exhibits in San Francisco and San Diego of survivor art. Many other organizations now offer this venue for survivors. Two survivor Waves poetry contests were also sponsored. We provided numerous in-service trainings to mental health and social service agencies. We were the first survivor organization to have a web page back in 1994 in the early days of the Internet and the World Wide Web. Most of our services were offered free of charge requesting only a donation. When we requested a

fee at our conferences, for example, we always had an honors policy that permitted anyone to participate no matter what their financial situation.

I estimate that over 20,000 individuals have experienced some service from THE MORRIS CENTER since we began in 1990 and that over 4,000 individual ASCA meetings have transpired since ASCA's inception in 1993. I am aware that many people use our materials which we offer freely on our web page for their personal growth and recovery. I am very pleased that last year people began ASCA meetings in South Africa - and recently in Chicago - by extracting the procedures and materials from our web site. I am also aware that many pseudo-ASCA groups exist. They use part of our protocol for their meetings but not the entire process. Many psychotherapists use our materials with their individual clients and facilitate therapy groups based on our literature.

I hope that everyone who has been associated with THE MORRIS CENTER over the past years, feel a sense of accomplishment and success, fulfillment and joy. We have offered and continue to provide a unique and valuable service to the adult survivor community.

The forthcoming years hold much promise for THE MORRIS CENTER. The organization has strong programs and a talented Board. The Board will be calling upon past and present participants to help grow and sustain THE MORRIS CENTER as the future unfolds. The future does not reside in the hands and hearts of the few, but rather in the hands and hearts of all who have received - and who may now be ready to lend a helping hand and an open heart.

I have been the recipient of the kindness and spiritedness of many volunteers over the years. I have been touched deeply by the unfolding stories of thousands of adult survivors of childhood abuse. I am particularly grateful for the help and assistance from hundreds of people who have assisted me to shape and form THE MORRIS CENTER into what it is today. Without the valued skills and energy of volunteers THE MORRIS CENTER could not have achieved one-tenth of what has been accomplished over the years. Thank you for your help and support.

Personally and publicly I want to thank Norma Morris for her faith and trust in me to steward THE MORRIS CENTER over the past years.

Starting, growing and sustaining THE MORRIS CENTER has been one of the highlights of my professional career and personal life. It has challenged and stretched me in many ways that will continue to influence my life for many years to come.

As I See It

Some Reflections and an Invitation

Jessy Keiser, President

I look out the window of my office and see the trees gently swaying in the wind. My heart is sad. Someone I love - who is also a survivor, but not in recovery - has relapsed again. Still, in spite of myself, my soul stirs with hope. I see two birds building a nest in one of the trees. I smile in delight. Don't they know what's going on in the world? No - they are unaware and going about fulfilling their purpose in life. For nature and life, this is important: the moment of now and of building something together.

As individual survivors, working to transform our lives, we face special challenges every day. But these are especially hard times for many of us. It's scary and things are so uncertain "out there".

These are challenging times for us all. As a nation, on September 11th we suffered a rude awakening - politically, economically, and socially - from our illusion of being invulnerable. Globally, we suffer slowly from the erosion of an ecosystem and social system that we, ourselves, have exploited to its current state.

So, what do we do for comfort and help? Whom can we trust?

Unfortunately, many people turn away from each other as a result of their fears - instead of turning to one another. Yet, this is the time we most need each other!

ASCA and THE MORRIS CENTER have always been here for me - as they have for many fellow survivors in times of need. Here I have met kindred spirits who have kept me strong when I have had to accept unbearable sorrows and losses. Here I have found community and hope

for a new life. Here I rekindled my belief that I can create a positive impact in this world.

You have probably heard that THE MORRIS CENTER will be undergoing some changes in the near future. The good news is that, as an organization, THE NORMA J. MORRIS CENTER for healing from child abuse has survived many changes and economic hardships. And this will be no exception - if we pull together and turn to one another instead of away from each other, as might be our old survival instinct.

Our Board of Directors consists of a strong group of leaders and representatives from our community. Together, we have come up with a strategic action plan that will take us into the next two years. But to make this plan succeed, we need your help.

In the next few months, we will be asking you to volunteer your time, passion, and ideas and make sure that our organization stays strong and grows. We want to host a "world café" to start a conversation on our future, which we hope will spread worldwide. Will you come?

Will you be there for us and will we be there for each other? Will you come and be a part of this? We need each other now more than ever. Let's not turn away from each other but turn to each other.

Outside, the two birds are still building their nest. Shall we follow their lead? Let's build our safe haven and future together...

Stay tuned for more news about how you can help and participate. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at: jmkeiser@pacbell.net. You can also leave a message on our voice mail: 415-928-4576.

**A MORRIS CENTER's Board Member Publishes
*Unintentional Music: Releasing Your Deepest Creativity***

Lane Arye

The last time you whistled a tune or hummed a song - why did you

choose that one? You may not consider yourself a musical person, but your little act of unintended music may be the key to unlocking within you a wealth of unsuspected creativity - a kind of creativity that goes way beyond music, too.

Lane Arye, a musician himself, focuses on the music that people do not intend to make. Using the highly regarded psychological model called Process Work, developed by Arnold Mindell, Ph.D., Arye has been teaching students around the world how to awaken their creativity, using music as the starting point, but including all art forms and ways of expression.

The unintentional appears at moments when some hidden part of us, something beyond our usual awareness, suddenly tries to express itself. If we start paying attention to what is trying to happen rather than to what we think should happen, we open the door to self-discovery. Sometimes what we regard as "mistakes" in self-expression are in fact treasures.
(Back Cover on Unintentional Music)

Though this book is not specifically and solely for adult survivors of childhood abuse, as I (George Bilotta) read and studied Lane's book, I found a wealth of helpful insight that is easily transferable and applicable to our situations of moving toward healing. I have never considered myself a musician, but I do hum and sing. I do enjoy music. I can appreciate through Lane's explanations and examples that mistakes are often doorways into the mysteries of who we are, where we have come from and where we are going.

Lane writes in a clear and easy to follow style. The book is full of readily identifiable examples that add life and depth to what he is encouraging us to explore. I personally found the book helpful for my present life situation. It is an enjoyable read. Its captivation had me reading for several days over a long weekend. I highly recommend Lane's book, not only because he is on our Board, but most importantly, because there is much in his book for all of us, even if we do not consider ourselves musicians.

If you are thinking of purchasing Lane's book, go through our web

site at www.ascasupport.org and click the Amazon.com link.
By ordering Lane's or any other book through Amazon.com by first going through our web page, we receive a small commission.

A New Book by Laura Davis
I Thought We'd Never Speak Again
The Road from Estrangement to Reconciliation

Laura Davis helped millions heal with her classic books *The Courage to Heal* and *Allies in Healing*. Her supportive guide *Becoming the Parent You Want to Be* taught parents to create a vision for their families. Now, in *I Thought We'd Never Speak Again*, she tackles another critical, emerging issue: reconciling relationships hindered by betrayal, anger, and misunderstanding.

In her introduction, Laura Davis tells us, "This book is about relationships that have been torn apart - and the many paths to reconciling them. Whether we are dealing with a brother we

no longer speak to, and adult child we wish we knew, a parent we long to make peace with, a friendship gone sour, or an enemy we have been taught to hate and fear, there is a path that we can use to repair - or make peace with - relationships that have been painfully estranged."

Laura Davis interviewed more than a hundred people about their experiences of estrangement and reconciliation and added her trademark clarity and compassion to map the reconciliation process. Her book is filled with stories of everyday estrangements and reconciliations: friends who stopped speaking over a misunderstanding at the movies, siblings who fought over a will, children who made peace with parents they hadn't spoken to in years. Mixed with these stories are more dramatic tales: victims of drunk drivers facing the people whose actions devastated their lives, children of Holocaust survivors meeting with the children of Nazis, Palestinian and Israeli teenagers learning to get along. All of these stories are deeply inspiring and demonstrate that the principles of reconciliation are consistent whether we are dealing with family members or the larger

world.

Making a crucial distinction between reconciliation and forgiveness, Laura Davis explains how people can make peace in relationships without necessarily forgiving past hurts or resolving all of their differences. Step by step, she clarifies the qualities needed for reconciliation - including maturity, discernment, courage, communication and compassion.

On every page of this inspiring and instructive book, Laura Davis offers hope and help for reconciliation between individuals, and in the larger human family, sharing essential keys for resolving troubled relationships and finding peace.

Poetry

Drunken Father

A boozier, a loser
A man on whom I wasted my affection
When I was young
Waiting at night by the living room window
For headlights beamed on Venetian blinds
Playing barbershop without a pair of scissors
While he numbed out with alcohol
In front of the TV.

Drowning his pain enough over the years
Until the only emotion left floating
On the surface was anger
Anger he would inflict on me
Dragging me away from work
Throwing me into a boat
Forcing me to drive the thing
While assuring me he never wanted my love.

Violent outbursts from drunken stupors

Knocking me up against the wall
Pushing hard against my heart
Shirt buttons ripping
Gripping me with hate too tightly

My integrity slipping away from me
I can't keep my heart open any longer
I don't know how.

There's an axe in my chest
I'm closing it now
Around this parental wound
Sins of the father penetrate
Perpetuate themselves in me
My shell growing harder
Some kind of container
Against all this insensitivity.

No apologies, no acts of contrition
Too much stress and too much duress
Shut down, closed 'til some future notice
Fro the present, the bloom is off this lotus
He's a bruiser
He likes it really rough
I'm not a bruiser
And I've been hurt enough!

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James has just finished his fourth volume of poetry: An Autobiographical Horror Story containing 21 poems depicting events in his life from birth to age twenty-one. Drunken Father is one of those poems. The volume can be ordered by sending \$6.00 with mailing address to: James Daniel, 401 Duboce, #4, San Francisoc, CA 94117. Questions or comments may be sent o the avove address or e-mialed to: ribturtle@aol.com .

The Truth by Steve

My earliest emotional memory was that of being alone unconnected unwanted. I could sense down in my gut that I wasn't welcome or wanted in the world at a very tender age. I remember being slapped by my older sister and being struck in the face by my mother with her purse when I wasn't expecting it (my nose bled). I developed a fear of women I suspect before concrete memories were formed. I can only speculate what happened before those memories. But considering my fear of women and the fact that I remember being struck by my mother and my sister when I would express my feelings leads me to believe these were not isolated incidents but indicative of a behavioral pattern.

I can only guess that when I cried for attention as an infant or toddler I was ignored or raged at or even physically assaulted. My mother rejected me. She despised me when I was at a very young age probably from birth on. She was angry at the men in her life. I suspect her father and my father and all the rage she felt toward them was dumped on me. I was the "container" for her rage. Of course as a boy I couldn't comprehend the idea that mommy has emotional problems. I could only conclude that mommy doesn't love me because I was bad.

When I was about ten my mother decided to put me in a boarding school. When she brought me for the first time to the school she showed me the school brochure that showed a boy walking a horse out in to a pasture "see Steven there are horses here." Like this was going to be some kind of summer camp. I knew she was trying to get rid of me. It wasn't a summer camp it was a holding pen for emotionally disturbed children many of them whose parents couldn't take care of them. These kids were "wards of the court" kids whose parents could not, or would not take care of them. Some of their fathers were in prison. The first day of school I tried to relate to one of the kids in the school. I said something he didn't like and he responded with violence. He was a little older than me. He was the strongest kid among his peers. His father was in prison. That incident was only the first of several terrifying events.

Just to give you an idea of the kind of place I was I had a mother cat with kittens that I brought to the school. The owners couldn't care for her and her kittens. One day I returned to the dormitory to see that one of the

kittens had been thrown down the staircase; it just lay there with a broken back. I got the shit knocked out of me on more than one occasion. One day I was punched in the eyes and later that day another boy blackened the other eye one. I remember being beaten up so bad that I lay on the ground whimpering while the boy kicked me. I was afraid every day. It was like living in a cage. I remember being whipped with a hanger, having my money stolen, being spit on, having my possessions taken and destroyed. I could do nothing.

The verbal abuse was the worst it was relentless and it went on for months "football head" "egg head" it seemed like an eternity. That was more painful than the physical abuses Most of the time I just had to take it. The others were stronger and more aggressive. I had no means to protect myself.

Where did I learn to let others victimize me? Konrad Stettbacher a Swiss psychotherapist in his book "Making sense of suffering" said "A child who has thus been damaged in its primal integrity may will become the object of persecution and ridicule during childhood."

What a nightmare. What a hellhole. All of that would have been survivable if I had sensed within myself that I was loved and wanted. The greatest pain I felt in that place was that I wasn't loved and wasn't wanted. Of course, I knew that all along but there in that place it hit the hardest. I felt completely without hope. How can a ten year old boy see that there are options? How could he see that he could tell someone he was suffering if there is no one in his life he feels cares about him, if he feels down in his soul that he is worthless and he deserves to suffer?

My mother would justify her putting me in that place with "I have to work." That is true she did have to work. But most single mothers have to work and they still have time albeit limited for their children. I wasn't there because my mother "had to work." I was there because I was not valued and honored as her child and I should have been. I thought deep in my soul I was not lovable. I was a piece of shit. Somewhere around that time all the circumstances combined caused me to shut down emotionally. I became numb. I didn't relive all that pain until several years later.

How have these childhood experiences affected me? They taught me that

my feelings (my reality) were not valid. That really loving a woman will only result in being rejected. They lead me to believe that all women were hard to please, selfish, sharp tongued materialistic people like my mother. Other affects have been chronic depression, chronic health problems a tendency to be oversensitive a tendency to withdraw from social contact with others. Not feeling I am capable of getting the education I need, the relationship I need the job that may be concomitant with my potential.

When I finally got out of that place I was fourteen. (I had spent four years there.) I began using drugs and spending time on the streets. Often times coming home at two o'clock in the morning drunk or stoned out of my mind. No one seemed to care. When I was picked up for the possession of marijuana who was it that came to the police station to pick me up? It was my Grandmother and Grandfather.

In spite of those beginning I managed to quit using drugs on my own at a young age. I joined sports and later joined a religion and pursued spiritual growth. I have not become an alcoholic or a drug addict nor have I become an abuser of others. I have been able to learn the value of honesty, kindness and an appreciation for hard work and spiritual values.

My Grandmother says "these things happened many years ago, forget it, forgive your mother, she had to work."

How do you "forget" the circumstances that formed your personality? Can a man born with no arms forget he has no arms? In a very real sense I started life with a deficiency of essential circumstances necessary to healthy adult life - the need to be cherished by my parents, to be respected for what and who I was, to be loved, to be protected. These things were my birthright. I started life with no self confidence, no self love. Instead I started life thinking I was a worthless encumbrance, the lowest piece of shit on the earth. I was taught these things in my formative years from birth on so how can I "forget" them?

The healing begins when I remember.

As far as forgiveness goes there is nothing to forgive. As far as I can see she is not sorry for her inappropriate priorities. To this day this is still the truth. When I got in an accident recently she did not call and ask "are you

ok?" Instead her primary and overwhelming concern was that her insurance might go up because I was driving her car at the time. When I asked her for some money to start an investment program for my future as I have little money, she flatly refused. The reason as she expressed it was "because I won't get any return on my investment." About ten days later she offered to buy a house from a man because that was a good investment. So lack of money is not the problem. Lack of love for her son is. When I stay with her at her expensive home her concern is her utility bill goes up slightly. She prefers I take showers at the gym so I won't use any hot water.

Yes she had to work but she wasn't working to give her children a good life if that were the case she would have fulfilled my most essential need or would have at least made an effort. She was working because she wanted money more that she wanted to raise her children, because work and the pursuit of material "success" were her drugs of choice to escape her own stuff. When she sent me away to that place she did not investigate it to find out what kind of place she was putting her ten year old son into. While I was there she did not ask if I was happy or if I was having any trouble. She did not care to notice the sadness on my face while I was there. Yes she had to work but I wasn't in there because she had to work. I was there because money and things were more important than me.

The truth is: It is not my fault I have had health problems and lack of feelings of self worth and have been depressed most of my life. The truth is she did not really love or want me. If she had I would have never been in that place. If she had loved me as a healthy parent I would have had the self-esteem to go to school and educate myself because I believed in myself. I would have chosen the right kind of a girl and pursued a relationship with her because I believed I had something to offer. If she and my absent father were responsible mature parents, I would have believed in myself and pursued the kind of career that was in harmony with my potential because I would have realized my potential. If she had loved me she would have done what ever was necessary to keep her children near her. She had a choice, I did not but I do now.

Announcements!

How to order the Survivor to Thriver manual? First, the manual can be downloaded from our web page for free. Second, to purchase a copy of the manual, send a check or money order payable to "The Morris Center" for \$25.00 (add \$5.00 for orders outside of US, i.e., \$30.00). Mail to George Bilotta, Survivor to Thriver, 173 Malden Street, West Boylston, MA 01583-1020, U.S.A. Manuals are sent priority mail usually within a few days.

If changes occur in the Co-Secretary assignments please let us know so we can forward future updated information to the correct person. Also if Co-Secretaries have a change in address, telephone number or e-mail, please send these changes to e-mail: tmc_asca@dnai.com or phone: 415.928.4576.
