

MICHIGAN MAN NEWSLETTER

January 1, 2004

Happy New Year!! How's the head? Got your bets in on the Bowl games? Made your resolutions? Broke any yet?

Seriously, I hope you are all in tact and ready to face the new year. I'm sure it's been a remarkable year for all of us, and I mean the country and the world.

Historians may note this era as one of the most tumultuous few years in history.

What a way to start the new millennium. Well, it's our time and let's make the most of it. Pray for peace and the safety of our troops, but also for guidance for our leadership. Might be the most worthwhile resolution I've ever made.

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Lighter notes!

Should children witness childbirth?

Due to a power outage at the time, only one paramedic responded to the call. The house was very, very dark, so the paramedic asked Katelyn, a 4-year-old girl, to hold a flashlight high over her mommy so he could see while he helped deliver the baby. Very diligently, Katelyn did as she was asked. Heidi pushed and pushed, and after a little while Connor was born. The paramedic lifted him by his little feet and spanked him on his bottom. Connor began to cry. The paramedic then thanked Katelyn for her help and asked the wide-eyed 4-year old what she thought about what she had just witnessed. Katelyn quickly responded, "He shouldn't have crawled in there in the first place. Smack him again."

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Did you know that Charles Darwin and Albert Einstein married their first cousins? Which brings me to my book recommendations.

"Middlesex" by Jeffrey Eugenides might be the best book I've ever read. It won the Pulitzer Prize last year. No, I am not that heady to be reading books of this caliber on a regular basis but this one, set in Asia Minor, Detroit and Petoskey was so well written with such a twist in looking at things. I hated to see it end. Check it out. It's in your library and just came out on paperback in the bookstores.

Another good one, especially if you have children who are into sports or if you were ever a jock (or jockette) is "Bleachers" by John Grisham. I'm actually making my fifteen year old son read it. It has all the elements of a great American super jock

who has everything, but it just doesn't work out that way. Wish this was around when I was a teenager. I'm reading Mitch Albom's "Five People You Meet in Heaven" for the second time. It's a beautiful book and a quick read. If you have any books you would recommend, e-mail me at mikeridley@triton.net.

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Links

Many of you have visited my web site, www.mikeridley.com and I've received a lot of positive feedback. Kudos to John Kerr aka Timothy Sparks for doing such a good job as the gonzo webmaster. Another site to visit is Resorter.com. If you want to get a northern Michigan feel drop in and scan the news from my hometown. Shameless commerce!! Comedyhome.com has my two CD's "Attitude Check" and "One of a Kind" in stock. You can also order them by dropping me an e-mail or stopping by one of my gigs.

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Gigs

I'm going to start running two months schedule in each Newsletter. Just in case I am late with one issue or you need to make plans way in advance.

January

1,2,3,17,31 (Hell Week & Saturdays) Nubs Nob in Harbor Springs
231.526.2131 3-6
8,15,22,29 (Thurs) Dick O'Dow's in Birmingham 248.642.1135 9-1
10 (Sat) BackRoads House Concert Alpena
989.356.1605
9 & 30 (Fri) Hoops in Auburn Hills 248.373.4744 9-1
23 & 24 (Fri & Sat) Thunder Bay Resort in Hillman
800.729.9375
16 (Fri) Brighton Optimist Club Comedy Show at
Brighton High School

February

5,12,19,26 (Thursdays) at Dick O'Dow's in Birmingham 9-1
13 & 14 (Fri & Sat) Douglas Lake Steak House 231.539.8588 7-10
14 & 28 (Sat) Nubs Nob 3-6
20 & 21 (Fri and Sat) Side Door Saloon in Petoskey 9-1
231.347.9291

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HANDSHAKES, HIGH FIVES AND HUGS; THE EVOLUTION OF MALE AFFECTION

Understandably, guys are a little hesitant in showing too much affection for one another. Even though it's not that thin of a line between good wishes and honest emotion and uh..er...ahem... well, you know, the Phobia. I mean, it's been taboo since the apostle Paul tried to set the Corinthians on the straight and narrow. Thanks to Queen Victoria it's become an issue of equal rights but that's another story.

From the time we are around, say ten years old, we start to hear, "Gross!!! You're not s'posed to hug men." Kinda sets this emotional constipation in motion, as it were. When the lovefest starts in our family, i.e., relatives, long time friends, etc. the young one comes to get his share of wraps while the older one firmly, yet quickly, shakes hands and takes two steps back. Oh, he can tolerate the aunts and grandmas but put a boisterous and effusive male in the circle. "Gross!!" I can see it on his face. The young son of some friends of ours, routinely dodges hugs by raising both hands in a defensive posture and moonwalks quickly in reverse chanting "Bubble! Bubble. Don't break the bubble." It's a real challenge to grab him and get in a good one

We descend, at least in this country from a generation of manly men. Men who fought wars and beat the Great Depression. They built the country and rebuilt the ones they defeated overseas. They smoked two packs of cigarettes a day and ate meat and potatoes every night. They washed down dinner with a cocktail or a couple of beers and played catch with the boys before they retreated to the easy chair and the evening news They hugged the girls good night and tapped the boys on the head and said sleep tight.

Consequently, their sons were never supposed to cry or wimp out under strenuous conditions. The twentieth century demanded a lot of testosterone and machismo just to get through the day without embarrassing yourself. How humiliating to be watching, say "Love Story" on a first date and when Ali McGraw kicks the bucket and the new love of your life looks tenderly into your eyes and whispers, "Jeesh!!! Quit yer blubbering. What a wimp!!" Well, maybe that was just me but anyway...

We instruct our sons; "a firm handshake, no dead fish there. boy. People will think you're a limp wrist. Get a grip!" "Chin up. Look him in the eye!" "Be assertive." All tools for success, if not intimidation. It's been that way for a long time.

In the beginning, handshakes were simply meant to show you didn't have a knife, sword or a rock in your hand. The First People had it right. Hand up, palm exposed. Nothing there. Trust me. Hmmm. How'd we get all their land?

I think the first aberration of the handshake was the "five", you know "Gimme some skin" "or slip me five" which probably started in the smoky jazz clubs, the urban boulevards and sun soaked asphalt playgrounds when someone would say or do something cool. "That's right, bro!! You got it." It might be music, a stated fact or just a quick quip but it was a slick slide of palm against palm and that was just the emphasis to seal it as fact, if not legend. I can't imagine it originating in the rural setting out-country. "Way to go, Elmer. You milked that Holstein like you owned it. Give me five, pardner." Nah! Can't see it.

Suddenly, and maybe it was sports, perhaps football or hockey when someone scored a goal or a touchdown and boom! Hugs all around!! That was acceptable. Even a smack on the bottom, but hard enough not to be mistaken for a forward pass. Nowadays it looks

like St. Paul would have a heart attack if he saw the way athletes celebrate a score. Maybe the male hugs grew out of a slap on the back and when too many crowded around the victor or the long lost friend you just kinda got pushed into a little cozier zone. But basketball, being a fast and fluid game that resulted in hoops being scored on a regular basis demanded some adaptation. Once upon a time, when there was a jump ball after every basket and final scores were 8-4 they shook hands and congratulated the scorer on his fine two handed granny shot but the game quickly progressed and players didn't have the time nor the luxury to emote after every basket. Along came the high five (which by the way, came from baseball's Glenn Burke, but again, another story). Now they run back down the court, palms raised, slapping elevated compliments with team mates while still on the move. There are variations on a theme. High Fives, low fives slow fives, double time fast fives. side slaps, and some routines that make the secret handshake rituals into the Water Buffaloes look like a first grade dance. Some athletes celebrate their accomplishments all by themselves. I've never been able to figure that one out. They make a basket or get a hit or catch a pass, which, by the way, they are paid very handsomely to do and they pound their fists to their chest, cross their forearms and point to the sky all the while mouthing the words, me, me, me. Huh?? I look forward to the day when the custodian who sweeps the floor, the mom who makes the dinner, the teacher who finally connects on the split infinitive stops everything and goes through the self serving motions of solitary celebration for just doing what they were supposed to do. Darn. I'm wandering off again. Sorry.

Now there's the jock hug and I don't mean you hug the jock. Gross, if not illegal or at least morally reprehensible. It's a simple right handshake while the left hand goes around the back and with a very subtle fist taps the back all the while drawing closer together until right shoulders touch and with a very stoic look say, "How ya doin', man?" If your comrade turns and softly whispers in your ear, "I'm doin' fine, man. Really fine." you've got a problem. Heads straight if not slightly turned away. It's a personal orientation guarantee.

I've seen the jock hug quite a bit on televised sporting events before and after games and at bars when two old friends meet. Both guys have to do it or it looks pretty silly when one does it and the other stands there like a victim of Candid Camera trying to decipher the emotional and social implications. Talk about a Kodak moment.

I ran into a few of old friends not long ago and one stood to hug me. Fine. We played basketball together. He's a married man, I'm a married man. Okay. Fine. But his table mates all stood to get their hugs as well. Okay. fine. The jock hugs were going well when suddenly the single guy's cheek brushed up against mine. Well, that's where I drew the line. No more hugs!! I reached out and shook hands with the rest of the guys while the perp with the puffy cheeks smiled and never took his eyes off me. Fine. We had our moment, now let it go.

It's not really a complicated issue. You can sense when someone will accept a hug and by no means should you force yourself on anyone. You might as well go to the park and hug the statue of General Grant. That's what it feels like.

A firm handshake for the gentlemen. A hug for the kids. You use your judgment every where else in between.

Me? Usually, I'm a hugger. I will hug dear friends most of the time but again times do call for adaptation and I've come up with the perfect solution. Make a fist. Extend it

slowly toward your friend. He, in turn, responds with a fist and you gently tap knuckles and say. "Cold and flu season. Trust me." It appears we've come full circle.

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SOME COUNTRY RULES TO LIVE BY:

Don't name a pig you plan to eat
Country fences need to be horse high, pig tight and bull strong
Life is not about how fast you run, or how high you climb, but how well you bounce
Keep skunks and bankers at a distance
Life is simpler when you plow around the stumps
Mortgaging a future crop is saddling a wobbly colt
A bumble bee is faster than a John Deere tractor
Trouble with a milk cow is she won't stay milked
Don't skinny dip with snapping turtles
Words that soak into your ears are whispered, not yelled
Meanness don't happen overnight
To know how country folks are doing, look at their barns, not their houses
Never lay an angry hand on a kid or an animal, it just ain't helpful
Teachers, bankers, and hoot owls sleep with one eye open
Forgive your enemies. It messes with their heads
Don't sell your mule to buy a plow
Two can live as cheap as one if one don't eat
Don't corner something meaner than you
You can catch more flies with honey than vinegar, assuming you want to catch flies
Man is the only critter who feels the need to label things as flowers or weeds
It don't take a very big person to carry a grudge
Don't go huntin' with a fellow named Chug-A-Lug
You can't unsay a cruel thing
Every path has some puddles
When you wallow with pigs, expect to get dirty
The best sermons are lived, not preached
Most of the stuff people worry about never happens
Lazy and Quarrelsome are ugly sisters

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Well, that seems to be all the news that fits. I hope to see you sometime down the road and sincerely hope you all have a safe, happy and prosperous 2004. It's rolling right along, eh?

Special thanks to Kathy Wilson up in Fairbanks for this nice reminder on her Christmas card.

“We must always remember to tell those around us how much we love them, before they drift away and we have to tell them how much we miss them.”

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This issue brought to you by a bunch of pink elephants