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March 4, 1998

Mainely Men Board

Dear Bert,

Here are some suggestions for the upcoming board meeting on March 6. They are in rough note form. Nothing etched in stone.

I have an overriding concern that MM has become conservative, a bit stodgy. We aren't getting any younger as a group and I think that it is unfortunate that we no longer attract younger men. The usual format no longer works for me. Since as a group we are highly composed of repeat attendees, we can presume that are many men who might feel the same way.

1. The closing circle, too often, is transformed into a workshop when its function should be to bring closure. It usually goes on for entirely too long. I know many men relate to the closing as "dead" time and leave the weekend or spend time elsewhere at Pilgrim Lodge.

Here are just a few preliminary suggestions to consider before the meeting. My intent here is to limit the duration of the closing circle.

- a. Introduce a talking stick to make the speaker more aware of speaking? (This however seems open-ended.)
- b. At Mid Coast Men, I hear there is a gong sounding every minute to remind the speaker of the passing of time. (A bit of pressure to be concise.)
- c. At my men's group we have a check-in time allotment and 30 seconds before the end the speaker is reminded that he has only 30 seconds. (Very effective for helping men to wrap up.)
- d. We could break into two groups of 40 or four groups of 20. This would give the men a closure experience in much less time. I find that listening to 60+ men makes everything blur into one closing statement. Closing in small groups might lend more intimacy to the experience also.

2. There is a broad interest at MM for an annual three-day weekend over Columbus Day. Let's explore the feasibility of doing that every October. The longer time might lend itself to longer workshops or repeated workshops. For instance, we could have 6 or 9 hour workshops on the same theme. My experience of

workshopping at MM is that they no longer offer much for me. We are stuck at the same Awareness 101 level weekend after weekend. What can we do to shake us up a bit and still meet the needs of the 20 or so men who are with us for the first time?

3. At one time we had a buddy system for the new men. Let's do it again. Also the Friday evening introductory period for the new men needs to have several board members inducting new men. We need to be sure that various points of view are represented at that induction.

4. I have frequently found Pilgrim Lodge to be a dark and uncomfortable place to hold Mainly Men. There are too many trees for a May and an October meeting. The shade must be great in July but it is detrimental to comfort in the spring and the fall. I'd prefer to meet in a place that was in full sun with a playing field right next to the building. While in the 24 times I have been at MM, I have heard a lot of talk about how wonderful a place PL is and how MM would not be the same without it. I have never agreed with that. Since I have no attachment to the place from summer camp days etc. I would like to propose that we look into other possibilities for the venues and then consider PL along with all of them and see which comes out ahead.

5. Do we as a board need to meet for a retreat once a year – an overnight – to explore what we might bring to the community of MM?

See you on Saturday.

Denis