

**A DIRTY DIAPER IS AN
EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

(OR)

**THE BEGINNINGS OF POTTY PARITY
AND
THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR MEN**

Plaintiff: Fathers' Rights Association of New York State

Defendant: City of Syracuse, Department of Aviation

Case #: 85-CV-972

July 1985

United States District Court - Northern District of New York
Syracuse, New York

BY FRANCIS BAUMLI, PH.D.

*****DEDICATION*****

*

JOHN ROSSLER

July 10, 1941 - November 14, 2018₁

A DIRTY DIAPER IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER
(OR)

THE BEGINNINGS OF POTTY PARITY AND
THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR MEN

BY FRANCIS BAUMLI, PH.D.

MEN'S LIBERATION: THE THREE DIRECTIONS

A review of men's liberation literature, most readily available in the book I myself edited,² shows that there were three main factions of the men's liberation movement. The fathers' rights activists (FRA's) came along first. They were well organized because they had one uniting principle—the need for fathers to be treated more fairly in

divorce, custody, and alimony situations. Later the men's rights activists (now usually referred to as MRA's) came along, with a more generalist agenda, covering issues that ranged further afield—men getting in touch with their feelings, gender inequality in the military draft, men's health, and men's right to expect women to take more responsibility with initiating intimate relationships. The third direction of men's liberation involved feminist men (FEM's) whose primary agenda was to use the feminist women's movement as an outlet for their otherwise unexpressed chivalrous tendencies. This group was numerous but might best be described with the observation that it thrived aimlessly. Aimlessly because it was an auxiliary for women rather than self-motivated, also because it was heavily made up of gay men whose agenda was more focused on being gay than being concerned with their identity and status as men, and also because they were addicted to the same rhetoric the feminist women used—a rhetoric which was blaming toward (straight) men, so riddled with fabricated statistics as to be a manufactory of lies, and always addicted to an equation that involved women's rights without women's responsibilities. While feminist women

could often get by with this agenda, given that they are the recipients of most men's male chivalry, the same rhetoric in feminist men rang hollow.

Some theoreticians might claim that the "new warrior" or "mytho-poetic" men were a fourth faction of the men's movement, but actually they were a subset of the feminist men and are made up of men whose sense of father deprivation has stripped them of self-reliance and whose sense of mother dominance is made up of an odd admixture of resentment toward their mothers along with a chronic personal cowardice. They spill much rhetoric about the need to "drive out the mother" but never evince an ability to do this in any fundamental way because what they are rebelling against still has such a hold on their masculine psyches that they dissipate their energies by taking refuge in self-deceptive re-enactments of primitive masculine rituals which can not apply to the real world. These rituals often are enacted (literally) in the woods where these men beat drums, do pseudo-manly posturings or exercises, and pay facilitators (who themselves possess a stunted masculinity), to help them play these "games" (their word). The result is that these rituals camouflage the fact that

their preachings about how they are emancipating themselves from their toxic parents actually are nothing more than a fearful exercise in self-deception. They set out pursuing personal strength, but end up becoming weaker precisely because they think they are stronger when actually they aren't. They always gravitate back to being even more entrenched feminists while they continue vaguely, aimlessly, but doggedly with their addiction to "going to the woods" where they play at sanitized rituals which allow them to pretend at being masculine while continuing in their role as self-abnegating feminist men in attitude and in deed.³

Thus having demarcated the three factions of the men's movement allows us to proceed toward the main topic of this paper. This topic had its genesis with both the FRA and the MRA factions and their primary activists. The involvement of several FRA activists who were involved in the potty parity issue will be focused on, we shall proceed with an overview of the MRA men who were the primary activists in the entire men's liberation movement, and a salient part of this article will involve describing the involvement of

NCFM and two of its MRA members in the afore-mentioned potty parity lawsuit.

THE MAIN MRA ACTIVISTS

For the moment let us focus on the three primary men's rights activists for the sake of establishing a context within which this essay's main topic can better be understood.⁴ The three most pivotal MRA people were Richard Haddad, Tom Williamson, and myself. Richard Haddad was one of the four men who, at Columbia, Maryland in 1977 founded the original Free Men. This organization was the first important "generalist" or "avant-garde" MRA organization and the enthusiasm of its members, channeled via the eloquence of Richard Haddad in his speeches and writings, resonated throughout the nation and eventually served as the primogenitor of the Coalition of Free Men, which became the National Coalition of Free Men in early 1989, and is now renamed the National Coalition For Men.

So as of this writing, what Richard Haddad began is still at the core of the National Coalition For Men which is by far the most influential, vigorous, and well-known

MRA group in the world. Haddad's work involved stewarding the publication of Free Men's newsletter, Options, and then publishing his own journal which was the very influential American Man. A growing family at home diverted Haddad's energies, and the last issue of American Man was published in fall of 1984. Since then Haddad has made only sporadic appearances in, and contributions to, the MRA movement. Still, he remains the most instrumental and revered personage of the MRA people, and his writings continue to inspire.

The second pivotal figure in the success of MRA was Tom Williamson, whose eloquence on radio and TV as an ideological spokesman superseded even his inimitable organizational activism and the unflagging energies he devoted to pushing the "free men" ideology into the national spotlight. Ultimately he was the one who made Free Men a national organization, expanding Free Men from the original Columbia, Maryland area into a small but growing group of members scattered across the United States. The result was that the fledgling chapter of Free Men on Long Island, already functioning with Tom Williamson as its president, became the Coalition of Free Men, a national

organization, on October 25, 1981 with Tom Williamson becoming its president. He would serve as national president from this date to June 6, 2004, i.e., almost a fourth of a century. Tom Williamson's activities as president of CFM—soon to become the National Coalition of Free Men (NCFM)—included guiding the organization, vigorous work with media personalities and their publications to get the MRA agenda promulgated, and attempting to build bridges with other factions of men's liberation, especially with the fathers' rights groups.

The third pivotal MRA person during these formative years was myself. I brought to the MRA movement the stamp of my personality as a scholar, which some might believe should have nothing to do with the MRA approach, but actually it was crucial to the stature of CFM because I lent an aura of scholarly rectitude and obvious erudition. With expertise in the fields of counseling psychology, neurology, lexicography, etymology, and philology along with a Ph.D. in philosophy and my position on the National Board of Advisors to the Institute for Advanced Philosophic Research, feminists who attempted to discredit statistics which describe the ways men are oppressed were given

considerable pause when I turned a scrutinizing (and often public) eye on their rhetorical claims. Even if they were not silenced they became cautious and sometimes even respectful.

In my actual work as an MRA I was book reviews editor for American Man, spent four years as editor of Transitions (newsletter for NCFM), and in 1985 published the influential anthology Men Freeing Men: Exploding the Myth of the Traditional Male (now, 33 years later, still in print). As an MRA I published in all the major men's liberation publications, and in other fields I published in venues as diverse as The National Geographic Magazine, International Studies in Philosophy, The Humanist, and Asahi Shimbun. This scholarly vantage placed me in the position of being somewhat aloof to the daily grind of MRA politics, with the happy result that MRA members who were arguing about the specifics of their political agendas often trusted me as a touchstone for unbiased judgements which pointed toward fair resolution of conflicts.

Crucial also was the way my MRA work dovetailed into my work with the FRA (fathers' rights activists). I belonged to all of their national organizations and many of their

regional organizations, published in their journals, and also brought to them my own unique agenda of fathers' rights activism: I not only was interested in fathers' rights, I also was interested in father's responsibilities as parents. This focus was congruent with the fact that I was the first custodial divorced father in Missouri and often wrote about how the daily exigencies of parenting affected my work both as an FRA and MRA. In fact my young daughter, Dacia, was often described as "the poster child of the Fathers' Rights movement" during the 1980s.

For about two decades—from the late 1980s to the late 1990s—Tom Williamson and I (both high-profile members of CFM and then NCFM) were the two people who actively worked at—and succeeded in—building important bridges and alliances between the men's rights movement and the fathers' rights movement. Tom Williamson's activism was more political. He attempted to establish allies in the FRA movement, helped bring some of the FRA members and even their organizations into the National Coalition of Free Men, and helped place important activists still in the FRA into leadership positions within MRA organizations (and vice versa). Moreover, he was crucial in helping recruit

the sympathies of certain national celebrity figures such as Dan Greenburg, Edward Asner, Karen DeÇrow, and others of their status into supporting the MRA agenda. As for myself, I worked directly with both the MRA and the FRA groups, getting each of them to be more receptive to the other's point of view. I gave several hundred talks to FRA groups in which, among other issues, I tried to hammer home a very salient message to the FRA people who tended to be more traditional, conservative, and cautious than the MRA people. This message was, essentially, that it makes no sense to live a life which places women on a pedestal, treat them chivalrously, and extol the traditional idea that they are morally superior to men, and then walk into the fray of a divorce and think you can temporarily put aside this habit of idealizing women or expect the judge or even your own lawyer to put those preconceptions aside. You need to realign your attitudes toward women long before a woman becomes your enemy in a divorce proceeding. In fact, you need to realize those views before you marry a woman— even before you date her; otherwise, your hopes for a fair divorce, or for a fair custodial arrangement with your children, are sabotaged from the very beginning by your

chivalry. You felt smugly secure in your chivalry when you were getting along with your wife. However, when the marriage began falling apart, since chivalry had always been an integral part of your personality, it became your inner enemy. In other words, because of your chivalry toward women, you became your own worst enemy. Many FRA's listened to this sentiment and gravitated toward the more generalist men's liberation agenda of the MRA.

I was just as blunt with FRA's on the issue of parenting. I had no patience for FRA's (or MRA's either) who gave lip service to divorce and custody rights, but then avoided the responsibilities of the parental rights they had gained in a divorce. I had a long-running debate with a prominent MRA leader who, after divorce, referred to the time he spent with his two sons as "having to babysit." And I put tact aside when I would encounter any fathers' rights activist whom I had recently helped in a custody battle but who now reported, when asked how his parenting was going, something like, "Well, I haven't seen the kids in a couple of months. I have a new girlfriend, and while we're getting our relationship going, my mother and sister are keeping the kids during the times I'm supposed to have

them." In short, I continued my practice of emphasizing not only rights but also responsibilities in all aspects of men's and women's liberation.

MEN'S RIGHTS AUTHORS, AND "MEN FREEING MEN"

Having put forth this overview of the important roles played by certain of the leading MRA's, an aside is in order here. I have noted that the main MRA people back during this time were Richard Haddad, Tom Williamson, and myself. Some might wonder why I do not include our main authors. The reason is simple. In their books, they set forth men's liberation ideology, and this ideology was aligned with our generalist or avant-garde point of view. These authors often were our inspiration—they served as an ideological guide and helped us demarcate our identities. But the authors themselves were not activists. They did not attend chapter meetings, they did not lobby, their radio and television appearances involved promoting their books more than promoting the MRA ideology. Sometimes they gave a keynote address at one of our conventions (always for pay) whereas the rest of us did everything on a volunteer basis.

They made money—in a couple of instances, millions—by being writers for the MRA ideology. And the more money they made, the more aloof they became to the MRA membership and the financial needs of the small organizations and publications. They expected to be wooed when it came to giving endorsements for MRA organizations. They never, ever paid dues to any national, much less regional, organizations. And they never subscribed to the various newsletters, instead expecting—even demanding—to receive them for free. Even Herb Goldberg, who was the primary men's rights writer (his book The Hazards of Being Male truly revolutionized the entire men's movement), distanced himself from the daily grind of men's organization details, avoided the time-consuming task of lending one-on-one interpersonal support, and except for several well-paid appearances at MRA rallies and a few early friendships with MRA men, he kept aloof from the MRA individuals, their organizations, and their activism.

But we MRA people who were not authors lost money. I figure I have spent about a quarter of a million dollars on expenses as an MRA activist, writer, and editor during my 40-year-career in this field. And if I were to add in to

this equation income lost because I was busy being an MRA, I know I have been out over a million dollars.

Our writers wrote books and made money; the MRA's did the necessary work and lost a lot of money. And there was another quality which separated our writers from the true MRA people. It involved what happens to a men's liberationist when he sets out to write a book on this topic. As an author he is going it alone; hence, his approach is very macho. His tone is dogmatic, his self-image often vain or even arrogant, and his general demeanor imperious. To succeed as an author he has to look strong, have staunch opinions, and when promoting his books possess the strength of personality to hold his own when up against hostile radio or television hosts and audiences. The process of writing about men's liberation thus becomes a very un-liberating praxis.

These claims of course invite the accusation that in putting out my own book, Men Freeing Men, I surely was behaving in the same non-liberationist ways which I am unabashedly claiming has plagued our main authors.

But the accusation is unwarranted because I did things differently. I did not write Men Freeing Men. I edited it.

I spent five years collecting articles, poetry, fiction, and organizing it all into a thorough compendium of the MRA philosophy. The book contained writings by a total of 54 authors, most of them MRA's already (in fact, most of them members of the Coalition of Free Men, although a few of them had never been a part of men's liberation until they appeared in this book). So in putting out this book I wasn't one of the "superstars." I was still doing the grunt work. I never had the luxury of taking an ego trip because I was too overworked, too tired, and too broke. (And it bears noting that even though the book enjoyed good sales and is still in print, as of this writing I have lost over ten-thousand dollars on it, given what it cost to produce and promote it.)

A note must here be made about my above claim that Men Freeing Men is a "thorough" compendium of MRA thinking. Actually it isn't quite thorough. Despite my best efforts, I could not obtain writings of high quality on the topic of aging or on the unique problems men of color experience as men. Also there is no section on grandfathering. A major speech on this topic was given by a very eloquent man, who promised to transcribe this speech and turn it into an

article, but he procrastinated finishing this project up to the last minute and then beyond the last minute. Also there should have been more in the book on men's health issues, and in fact there was to have been, but shortly before publication the most important and lengthy article got pulled. Also I still wonder if there should have been a lengthy section on the ERA. However, everything with this topic, including not only laws but also MRA perspectives, kept changing so rapidly that each time I set out to organize this section the situation would go through a major metamorphosis. At last I despaired of having a satisfactory piece on this topic simply because it was evolving too rapidly to allow definitive description or judgements. However, excepting these five areas, the book was comprehensive, definitive, and represented the broad spectrum of the men's rights activist while also giving considerable emphasis to the agenda of the fathers' rights activist.

Almost immediately, upon its release, opposition to the book, Men Freeing Men, began. Feminists at sales and promotion conferences stole orders placed by buyers. Feminists occupying positions in book distribution houses

managed to lose or delay orders. The response of the feminist press was shrill and obviously worried. Many reviewers found excuses to not review the book, the most common one being that the book was misogynistic. But the book sold, at first steadily, and eventually vigorously.

Men's rights activists now were being taken seriously and were being criticized seriously. The criticism was not always easy to take. After all, a part of the men's liberation agenda involves men getting in touch with their feelings. This means that, when we were criticized, this criticism often hurt our feelings.

PERSONALITY OF THE MRA

Commentary is here warranted on the type of man who is drawn to men's liberation and ends up becoming an MRA. First, by reason of his basic temperament, he is highly sensitive in the emotional realm. Things bother him more than they bother the average man. For example, most men who go out to a restaurant with a woman, if she does not offer to pick up her part of the bill, either shrug their shoulders or feel momentarily miffed but then forget about

it. But an MRA, perhaps even long before he became a full-scale MRA, feels offended by this. He might make an issue of it with the woman, who then might choose to not see him again, or he might choose to not see the woman again. As a highly sensitive man his feelings are easily hurt or wounded. This happens, for example, when divorce looms. The ordinary man might just take the attitude that he will "make do" with what his lawyer can get for him. The MRA is angered at having to pay alimony, is angry at not getting joint custody, and is mortally wounded when his rights to be with his children are taken away. This same man resents it when feminists manufacture false statistics about supposed male privilege. He resents women who accuse him of being a misogynist when actually he loves women ... or at least tries to. He knows that the word "sexist," when used against men only, is itself a sexist word. In these ways he is more sensitive than the average man to injustices committed against men, but at his best he also is fair-minded, idealistic, and philanthropic. He wants to make the world a better place so he can feel at ease with it, and he wants to make it a better place for other men too. His anger may be what motivated him toward becoming an activist

in the first place, but it is his generosity of spirit which keeps him committed and working when the going gets tough, the hours are long, and the rewards are elusive and meager.

These observations about the type of personality who becomes an MRA of course have exceptions, but the generalizations are true and they can help us understand the MRA. It warrants being noted, too, that there are four types of MRA's and we can better understand what the MRA is by noting these types.

MRA TYPES

The first is the frivolous type (as we call them). They are men who became an MRA out of curiosity, maybe go to a meeting or two, and then never come back. But more often than because of curiosity, they get involved because it is "just something to do" (as I have heard many who come to our meetings and events put it). For them it is entertainment—a way to socialize. Less boring than staying at home and watching TV, and not as emotionally demanding as going to church so long as they remain mere passive

spectators. Nevertheless, witnessing other men's passion gives these frivolous participants a mild vicarious excitement, so it sometimes happens that certain such members might belong to a particular MRA or FRA organization and come to the meetings for years. They are harmless. If they pay their dues, then they are helpful in that way. They only disappoint when the really impassioned members go to them with expectations. The smartest way of dealing with them is to welcome them, abide them, and be polite while making sure they don't waste your time.

It bears noting that a few of these frivolous types—by their own admission—were women who attended just to meet men, and (according to a woman I myself had the displeasure of knowing), "I just like being around all that testosterone." The best way of dealing with such women is to ignore them unless you happen to be wanting what they want.

The second is the impulsive type. This man becomes an MRA usually by joining a group in the heat of passion—a recent anger stemming from something like a bad divorce, a son killed in a foreign war, or a false allegation of sexual harassment. But impulsive passions soon fade,

activism does not persist, and instead of pursuing prudent strategy in an activist stance this type of man becomes impatient and drops out. Obviously his benevolent, altruistic feelings toward other men or society in general are shallow, short lived, and when he ceases to be an MRA this is probably a favor to other MRA's who had hoped to depend on him for mutual support.

The third type of MRA is what I call the "single-issue" man. This man may have some interest in a broad spectrum of MRA issues, but this broad spectrum does not command his interest as keenly as does a certain single issue. For example, in the early days of the Coalition of Free Men there was a prominent member who was only interested in women taking initiative with asking men out on dates. Another man was primarily interested in how men are mistreated in movies—especially their being kicked or hit in the testicles. Another was obsessed with opposing the all-male military draft.

Then there were the true generalists such as Richard Haddad, Tom Williamson, and myself. We were interested in the entire spectrum of men's rights issues. This did not always mean, however, that we devoted the same amount of

time and energy to every issue. In fact, Rich Haddad who was about as generalist as an MRA could be, nevertheless took exception to supporting gay men—even in their rights as men, because he felt that men in general are so homophobic that pursuing this topic would alienate other potential MRA members. Tom Williamson, even though he was thoroughly interested in all the issues, nevertheless, for a few years, gave much attention and energy to the ERA and how it affects men. As for myself, although I was a true generalist, I had my own pet issue partly because I was a single male parent. My issue was parenting. Not just fathers' rights, but fathers realizing the importance of not just having custody but also being active custodial parents.

HOW THE MRA AND FRA WORKED TOGETHER

Because of my interest in parenting, I did much work with FRA groups. I belonged to several regional and also national groups, I tried to emphasize that having custody is useless unless you want to actively parent your children, and also I appreciated what the FRA men brought

to men's liberation. They were the ones who were willing to spend long hours lobbying for father-friendly legislation in state assemblies, and they gave emotional support to individuals who were fighting for custody of their children. And one thing which always impressed me was the fact that the commonality of their issues resulted in a refreshing sense of democracy among members. For example, during the very early 1980's, there was a fathers' rights group based in Kansas City called Divorced Dads, Incorporated whose president was a very committed activist named Jack Paradise. The chapter in Kansas City was vigorous and effective, doing work in both Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Kansas. Also there were working chapters in Saint Louis, Missouri and Springfield, Missouri. I, with two other men, formed a chapter of DDI in Columbia, Missouri in early 1982 and we served mainly as an educational group with monthly meetings to which we would bring attorneys, divorce mediators, counselors, and state legislators to give talks. We also served as an attorney-referral network and did courtroom watching—hoping to give the presiding judge an awareness that fathers as a group were scrutinizing such matters. It bears noting that at

this time joint custody was only beginning to be a part of the fathers' rights agenda in Missouri. Mainly we helped steward hearings which involved child support, visitation rights, and alimony. (Now, years later, I look back upon our courtroom watching—which was considerable—and wonder if our "force by numbers" as we called it actually angered the judge and, unbeknownst to us, ended up backfiring since the judge, out of spiteful arrogance, might actually have ended up being less generous toward the member we were there to help.)

To illustrate what I above referred to as the refreshing sense of democracy in the FRA groups, of the three men who founded the DDI group in Columbia, Missouri, one was the night custodian at one of the large local banks. He would take off work for a couple of hours and come in wearing his overalls with a huge ring of keys dangling at his side. One night a man came in wearing a suit and tie, and it turned out that this man was president of the very bank this custodian worked at. He had come because he also was going through a divorce. So there they were. The president of a prestigious bank and its night custodian, talking equally because they were united over

concerns about their rights in divorce court. This, clearly, was a group of men who despite their different jobs and the diversity of their roles in society were demonstrating that they could achieve camaraderie, mutual respect, and sometimes friendship as they worked together on issues that united them.

Unfortunately, the chapter of DDI in Columbia, Missouri, although it had flourished in 1982 and 1983, rather abruptly ceased functioning in early 1984 because members—actual and potential—were discouraged by our lack of gains in the legal system. About this time the other three chapters were withering away too. Still, there for a while we had made a difference for many men and their children, and the cooperation among members was considerable.⁷

I wanted to take this spirit of cooperation among FRA's that was based on shared interests and help instill it into the MRA outlook. A very concrete opportunity for doing this would soon present itself in a very crucial issue that would unite the MRA with the FRA and would bring my involvement with both groups into more unified focus. It

began in a way that was very unique, and so personal that only later could it become political.

HOW THE DIAPER-CHANGING ISSUE CAME ABOUT

I have before written, and published, about this beginning and I think it best to quote, at length, from what I wrote back then. The matter at hand began back in late 1977 when my daughter was just a little over two years old. For a complex set of reasons I am about to explain, I published an article about my divorce, about having gained custody of my daughter, and the need to take my daughter with me when my work required me to travel. The following lengthy excerpt tells a tale which was the beginning of a legal process that would change the world of parenting in a crucial way:

Although when I was divorced I lost custody of my 1&1/2-year-old daughter, my former wife did not want to keep her. She was too busy building a new life with her new boyfriend, stringing herself out on drugs, and doing other things like, “finding myself,” and, “exploring all my options.” So within six weeks of the divorce I was a

full-time parent, and ten months after the divorce I went back to court and obtained uncontested custody of my daughter.

All of us in the men's movement, who are divorced fathers, want to have custody of our children. But let me tell you one thing. When the reality of being a full-time custodial parent hits you, however preferable it is to being an absentee parent, it is not all a bed of roses. I was a busy man during this time. I was trying to juggle family (daughter and me) with career. Doing this meant that when I traveled I often had to take my daughter with me.

Allow me to put one thing in blunt language: there is a lot of shit-work when taking care of a two-year-old. And when I say shit-work, I mean it literally. Imagine the following: you are rushing through a terminal to catch your next flight, you are carrying your luggage and your little daughter with you, and suddenly the tell-tale smell announces itself. You go to a corner of the big lounge and put her on the floor to change her. But this time it isn't your ordinary "poopy-diaper." It's running down her leg, it's on her dress, and you don't know how in all hell you're going to get a mess like that cleaned up in the next ten minutes.

I could, of course, have taken my daughter into the men's restroom. I tried this a few times. But it did not work very well. I might be at the only sink in the restroom, with a man urinating at an exposed urinal not two feet away, and another man behind me waiting impatiently for his turn to use the sink while I am needing another five minutes to get this two-year-old cleaned up.

So I took another approach. I began carrying an extra suitcase—a big one which held extra diapers, a wet wash-cloth, two wet towels, paper towels, and two dry towels. That was a damned heavy suitcase to carry along with all the other stuff.

One day, while in my home city, I was in a large public building and I ran into a friend of mine. Her name is Kristen, and her daughter is about one year older than mine. Kristen looked distressed, and I asked her what was the matter. “Look at that,” she said, glancing down at her daughter, who was being held out at an awkward angle away from her mother’s body. “I’ve got to go clean her up.” There it was: the brown running down both little legs.

“Listen; I can help,” I said. “I’ve got everything you need in my car.”

“Oh no,” she said, “I’ll manage in the restroom.”

I knew that I could never have managed such a mess in the men’s restroom of that building. It was a small, one-stall job, with a single sink right next to the door. The room, counting the toilet, was maybe five-foot square, and there was scarcely enough space for two men to stand outside the stall. Most of the time there were no towels by the sink, and often there was no toilet-paper. Given this situation with the men’s restroom, I quite understandably wondered how Kristen was going to get her little girl cleaned up in such facilities.

A few days later I found out. I was in the building at night, the only other people were busy working in their offices, so I went down to check out the women’s restroom. I could scarcely believe it! The room was about twenty feet long and ten feet wide. There were two couches along the wall. There were three brightly lit

sinks, all of them positioned in spacious counter-tops. There was toilet-paper in every stall, ~~three~~ stalls, there were two kinds of paper towel dispensers, both of them full, and the room was clean and brightly lit. With facilities like that, you could give your child a bath if you needed to.

Ever since then, whenever I am in a public place and people are not around, I check out the women's restrooms and compare them to the men's. I do not exaggerate when I say that 90% of the time the disparity is quite like the one I above describe.

And believe me, during those hundreds of times I changed Dacia's diaper in public, I was more than angry—I was in a rage—that I did not have access to the changing facilities that women have. Sometimes, of course, I could find a corner in a big waiting-area and do the job in relative privacy. One particular time that was not so private, however, stands out in my memory. Close to the back door of a large restaurant, I had positioned my daughter Dacia on the floor to change a dirty diaper. I had just unpinned her, and as I saw the evidence, I thought to myself, "This is going to be a tough one." Right then that back door opened, and a line of people began slowly filing in. I looked out through the windows. Three buses were unloading. During the next five minutes, about two-hundred people filed by, not six feet from where I was hunkered over Dacia, doing the grim work. Dacia lay there on her back, laughing and kicking her legs. She was just a little girl, and she was enjoying all the attention. I sure wasn't.

Having men's changing rooms during those busy times could have meant a lot of things for me. It could have meant feeling more accepted by my society as a parenting father. For others, in situations where couples were traveling together, it could have meant that men would have changed more diapers, and women would have changed fewer diapers, i.e., men would have had more opportunities to parent, and women would have had fewer obligations to parent. But the thing that would have meant the most for me, was that a small but taxing aspect of my job as a parent would have been easier, and I would have been spared some rather embarrassing situations. Plus, I would not have had to carry that extra suitcase. It must have been a comical sight—maybe even an heroic sight—to see this father walking through a terminal, his own small suitcase carried by a strap over his shoulder, Dacia's small suitcase in one hand, Dacia being supported by the arm that carried her small suitcase, and that big, blue, emergency suitcase in the other hand. I tell you, walking a couple hundred yards with all that baggage made pumping iron look easy.⁸

Those rigorous travels commenced back in late 1977. That is well over a third of a century ago. At that same time—over a third of a century ago—I discovered that when it came to changing a diaper in a public place, women had it a whole lot easier than men did. This issue soon became politicized, and in fact, the article I quote from above

occurred in the midst of a fracas among FRA leaders that had been published in Legal Beagle, which was the publication of C.O.P.E. (Coalition Organized for Parental Equality) and for several years would be the de facto publication for NCM (the National Congress for Men)—which was for a few years (3-4) the pre-eminent fathers' rights organization. Men's Rights Association (MRA), later renamed Men's Defense Association (MDA), headed by Richard Doyle (author of The Rape of the Male), in conjunction with NCM comprised the two foremost national fathers' rights organizations in the United States (and therefore in the world).

The fracas I above refer to involved three published issues of Legal Beagle: February 1986, March 1986, and May 1986. It began with Doyle writing an "open letter" to the men's movement, touching on several issues, and taking a critical (even sarcastic) swipe at men he thought were sacrificing their manhood by working toward parity regarding diaper-changing tables for men. John Rossler then published a vigorous response, emphasizing the fact that fathers' rights is a hollow issue without parental involvement by fathers who have those rights. I myself

subsequently wrote an article hoping to make peace between these two men, both strong and influential leaders in the fathers' rights movement, and despite their disagreements, and despite my strong and blunt exceptions to Doyle's position, had much to commend them despite their differences. They generally held cogent and trenchant positions on fathers' rights, were influential in the fathers' rights movement, and for the most part were amiable gentlemen who worked well together despite their occasional differences of opinion.

My article, quoted above, refers to problems I encountered starting in 1977 with what, years later, would come to be called the "potty parity" issue. By 1986, when I finally wrote about my first encounters with that issue, much had transpired in the intervening nine years.

SINGLE MALE PARENTS ENCOUNTER "OTHER SEXISMS"

In my own life it wasn't just a lack of public facilities which would have made diaper changing easier. There were "other sexism" (as I called them) which I kept encountering as the single male parent of a young daughter.

Part of this sexism involved the way our society was arranged so that if women needed financial help with raising children, they could get it, but men at that time did not have access to the financial resources women did. During the brief time my wife had had legal custody of our daughter (even though she did not exercise it) she had received child support from me. But when I got custody nobody but me thought about my asking for child support. My attorney advised against my requesting child support because we already were asking for what our society at that time considered a great deal—in fact the judge might believe my asking for child support was way too much since if I got custody of my daughter then I would be the first divorced man in Missouri to ever win this. Also winning child support might be just too radical in the judge's mind. The trial commenced, the idea of giving me financial support certainly didn't occur to the judge, so at the end of the trial there I sat, the custodial parent, fast on my way to becoming an impoverished man because even though I was working I also was turning down jobs right and left. In a very short time I could barely pay my bills, and every trip to the grocery store involved major decisions. So late

summer of 1978 I went to my local county seat in Fayette, Missouri to see if the Division of Family Services (DFS) would grant me Aid for Dependent Children (ADC). I spoke with a very nice, and thoroughly apologetic, middle-aged woman who did the math on my income and expenses, said that certainly I qualified for support on financial grounds, and in fact she wondered how I was getting by. However, there was one major hitch. I qualified, but actually I didn't qualify because I am a man. Yes; if I were a woman, I could get ADC, but at that time ADC was never given to male parents. Angry about one more sexism in society, but still able to appreciate the woman's kindness, I left with no financial aid and with more burning resentment. I was desperate enough, or dumb enough, to even call my ex-wife and ask if she could help me out financially. She sarcastically told me she wouldn't do it, and if I couldn't take care of Dacia then I should just give her back. Of course she didn't mean this. It was just a very effective way of scaring me away. And that woman certainly did not have a generous bone in her body, not even toward her own daughter. Our financial settlement at the time of the divorce involved my paying her a huge lump sum so I could

keep my house and the small farm it sat on. After exactly two years, never working even an hour, that woman had spent every penny of that financial settlement. She even absconded with the savings account we had set up for Dacia (only \$600) and spent it on herself as her money dwindled away to nothing. In short, I was barely scraping by, a woman in my place could have received monetary assistance from the government, but I couldn't because I was a man.

But aside from this financial difficulty, there was another major difficulty which, emotionally at least, was much more difficult than the financial difficulty. This was the fact that virtually every woman I knew, whether friend or relative or neighbor, told me over and over that, "A young girl's place is with her mother and if her mother ever quits those drugs and gets herself straightened out, then you should let Dacia go back and live with her mother." Many said I should go ahead and do this now even though her mother was on drugs—taking the view that a mother strung out on drugs is better than no mother at all even when there is a responsible father doing the parenting duties. Women especially were critical. "She's too skinny. You aren't feeding her right." (or) "Those clothes don't

fit her. Did you buy them at a garage sale?" (Yes.) "If you're going to let her hair get that long, you should brush it more often." (I know.) "Without a mother, she's going to grow up thinking she's a boy." (Where is the science behind this claim?)

Women in their early 20's, I noticed, never held these attitudes. But in truth they showed little or no interest in Dacia. The most difficult people were my relatives and closest friends. Even my mother and two of my sisters gave me the message, "If you ever have a chance, you should reunite her with her mother, even if it's risky." And women my age (about 30), or a generation older, just couldn't stand the assault on their own identity that seemed to happen when they saw a man succeeding at changing a diaper. I soon became aware of how they would hang back while I cleaned up the gruesome mess, but then when it came time to put on the clean diaper, they would press forward, pushing me aside, taking over, showing me the right way to pin a diaper, the correct positioning of the folds, and how snug the diaper should be. Over and over I would hear the words, "You aren't doing it right!" But it was obvious to me that they didn't know any more about this simple task than I

did. It was just that they felt threatened—in their role and in their identity—seeing a man doing a woman's job. They weren't willing to accept the fact that cleaning up pee and poop is a gender-neutral job.

AN ENCOMIUM ON RUBY BOGGS

There was one exception, and unusual though it may be to take a side-trip in one's prose when dealing with a topic such as this, I shall allow myself this indulgence because actually I am not quite straying in the direction of a digression; rather, I am gratefully giving a special person her due.

I had a neighbor named Ruby Boggs whose attitude was an exception to the attitude of all those other women. She was a hard-working, cheerful woman who lived up the road about two miles from me. Married to Joe Boggs, a man I thought the world of (and one of the last of a dying breed known as real men!), they had two children: Sheila, uncommonly spirited and thoughtful, and Shannon, uncommonly friendly and as intelligent a young fellow as you could ever meet. I spent a lot of time in their household, and of all the

women I knew, Ruby never once said a disapproving word about anything I did or should do as a parent. If she did disapprove (although I don't think she did) she was too polite to let on. I could call her at eight o'clock at night, fixing a late supper, and ask her how she made that sausage gravy Dacia loved. Or I could ask her for advice about potty-training, or ask her how to get Dacia to brush her teeth. She was always generous with advice, she helped when asked but didn't meddle, and I heard from other neighbors that she often spoke highly of me, saying what a good job I was doing.

Another neighbor lady said to me, "That Ruby Boggs thinks you're doing a good job raising that girl, but I still think you would be better off letting her go live with her mother."

"But Dacia wouldn't be better off."

"You should work it out so she can be with her mother."

"Her mother is still out in la-la land on drugs."

"Well, she might not be if she had a daughter to take care of."

"She doesn't even want to see her daughter."

"I know better. A mother always wants to be with her daughter."

This was the kind of social abuse (yes, it certainly was abuse) I had to put up with.

But not from Ruby Boggs. She always had a smile on her face. When she saw me with Dacia that smile grew warmer. I owe her a debt of eternal gratitude for what she gave me. Maybe the entire fathers' rights movement owes her a special place in their Hall of Fame, i.e., in their hearts. She was about four years older than me: born August 23, 1944. She would die at age 55 from cancer in 1999 on her birthday. By this time I lived hundreds of miles away, but by phone I talked with her on her deathbed, although I did not get there in time to see her before she died. I shall always hold her memory in my heart for the simple reason that she accepted me, even welcomed me, as a father.

So now I have this wonderful memory, but back then the struggle was still on and usually I felt very lonely in that struggle. It was over 40 years ago when I had come to a realization about society's careless, callous, and sexist attitudes about allowing a man to have the same diaper-changing facilities women have. One might say that this

time—the mid-1970's—was the Dark Ages for men's liberation. Was I the first to have this awareness—these insights about diaper-changing inequity? Probably not. But as far as I know, I was the first man in the fathers' rights movement to have this awareness, and the very first to begin contemplating legal possibilities for making changes in our society about this disparity.

JOHN ROSSLER BECOMES AN ALLY

I would come to learn, however, that I would not remain alone in my sentiments about this disparity for very long. It was more than 40 years ago when I first began wrestling with the diaper-changing issue, but it was not as long ago (although still over a third of a century ago) when a man I didn't even know at that time would have a realization of his own, one that he called an epiphany, and this realization was what would eventually bring us together as activists and friends.

This man's name is John Rossler, and his introduction to the diaper-changing issue came about in what a person might describe as a less frantic situation than what my

introduction(s) involved. In the early 1980s he had been on a trip to Haiti with a girlfriend. They were enduring a six-hour layover at the John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City and John Rossler was watching what was going on in the terminal. Slowly he became aware that all over that terminal there were men changing their baby's diaper on the floor. John's first thought was, "Wait a minute! This is not what happens in the real world. Women change diapers too." So why was it that in this airport terminal only men were changing diapers and no women were?

He and his girlfriend decided to look around. His girlfriend soon discovered that as a matter of fact there were plenty of women changing diapers in this airport, but they were doing it in the women's restrooms where there were, as John put it, "posh" facilities for changing diapers. But no men were changing diapers in the men's restrooms because there were no diaper-changing facilities in there, posh or otherwise. This observation, John emphasized, was only an "informal survey" which was brief. But it was for him what he called a "eureka moment" and later he would describe it as an "epiphany."

Meanwhile he was a busy family man. A divorce from his wife (hence the girlfriend) had decreed custody for the mother and liberal (for the time) visitation rights for John. But at the request of the children, this arrangement after a few years became more egalitarian, and soon the children were spending half their time with mom and half their time with John.

John Rossler was a busy father who took his parenting responsibilities seriously, and he had become very involved in the fathers' rights movement. At first his involvement was in the Syracuse, New York area where he lived, and there he helped found a fathers' rights organization called Equal Rights for Fathers (ERF). This organization soon had a respectable membership ("more than fifty, but I don't think it was ever one hundred," John Rossler recalled in a recent phone conversation we had before my writing this book commenced). This organization began holding meetings, doing lobbying with the state legislature on behalf of fathers, and then the epiphany which John experienced about fathers needing diaper-changing facilities soon helped begin the process of changing everything.

BIRTHING THE IDEA FOR A LAWSUIT

Already, in phone conversations with Tom Williamson, John Rossler had explored the idea of finding a fertile issue which a fathers' rights group, or a men's rights group, could press a lawsuit over. They both felt that a lawsuit would be an excellent way to give the nascent men's liberation movement a boost. John knew the lawyer and feminist activist Karen DeCrow already—they had been personal friends for years—and he thought he could inveigh upon her to take a lawsuit on behalf of men if they could just find the right topic. Tom was in favor of an ERA lawsuit on behalf of men's rights, but John believed Karen would never be willing to press such a lawsuit on behalf of men since she was so committed to (even mired in) lawsuits on behalf of the ERA for women. However, John was at a loss as to what topic he himself would want to select as prime grounds for a lawsuit. Veterans' rights? Men's health issues? Job safety rules?

Not long after Tom and John had more or less abandoned this subject as a topic of conversation, given that nothing was being selected that they both felt enthusiastic about,

it would happen that in a phone conversation with John I myself suggested a lawsuit to set in motion parity for diaper-changing facilities. John brought this up with ERF. To this day John says he "remains flabbergasted" as to why there was so much spontaneous resistance in ERF to this issue. There were the usual arguments that it would detract from men's masculine self-image, but there seemed to be another motive for this resistance which John Rossler, who was intimately involved with the membership, could not identify and which I could not at all fathom when I made some exploratory phone calls. Now, looking back 34 years later, I think it was a cluster of feelings and perspectives which were vague, poorly understood, and very poorly articulated in conversation. Some men thought the lawsuit would distract FRA's from what they considered more important issues in the fathers' rights movement, such as avoiding alimony, or simply obtaining visitation rights to their kids. Others, to put it bluntly, were selfish enough to be more interested in fathers having parental rights than in fathers discharging their duties as parents once they had those rights. Many men, possessing more traditionalist personalities in general, thought that a

diaper-changing lawsuit was an affront to their masculine identity. It made them feel silly and frivolous. While I myself consider this an immature attitude about one's identity and self-image, I must concede that in some ways it was understandable at the time. Men already felt that everything about the masculine identity was being criticized by feminists, and everything about the masculine identity was under assault by most of our society—especially by the media. Hence, the members of ERF did not want to get into a fracas which would open them up to more criticism by feminists and more criticism from society in general. We must remember that this was a time when all things masculine were being criticized and the average man had his back to the wall.

FATHERS' RIGHTS ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK

(AND THEN)

FATHERS' RIGHTS ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK STATE

ENTER THE PICTURE

The result of ERF's opposition to a lawsuit was a rather impassioned internal debate, with John Rossler

leading one side, and an oral surgeon (whose name neither John nor I can remember) leading the other side. John, typical of his fair-minded demeanor and actions, worked hard for a compromise but the opposition, already angry, was not going to budge. The result was that in a tumultuous and confused process that was both painful and protracted, ERF split in half, then both sides quickly atrophied and disappeared. This happened during the years 1983 to 1984,⁹ and John Rossler, not wanting to do any fathers' rights work among people who still felt antagonized by the internal schism in ERF, turned his attention to New York City. There, with the help of several other men, he founded a new group called Fathers' Rights Association of New York which came to be known by the affectionate acronym FRANY. (Rhymes with "fanny.") John Rossler, and a few other members from Syracuse, were instrumental in getting this group functioning and it soon was getting the attention of regional fathers' rights groups all over the country. Since it was centered in Manhattan, and since everyone involved was hoping that eventually there would be other chapters, FRANY came to be thought of as the umbrella name for what might soon be many chapters. So the Manhattan group, in its

identity as a chapter of what was intended to become a larger group of many chapters, took on the name The New York Metropolitan Chapter of Fathers' Rights Association of New York, and this "downtown" chapter claimed members from New York City and the surrounding area. All chapter meetings were held in Manhattan. Later, about 1990, Tom Williamson (of the National Coalition of Free Men) and a hard-working activist named Andrew Carlan (active with Long Island League of Divorced Fathers and a member of the National Coalition of Free Men), because the trip from Long Island to downtown Manhattan was so time-consuming, formed a Long Island chapter of Fathers' Rights Association of New York. This chapter flourished for at least three years with 30 to 50 members. They did courtroom watching, picket-line work, mounted several major demonstrations, worked closely with Long Island League of Divorced Fathers, and were an enthusiastic and effective group. However, this chapter would lose members as attorneys began defining its character. The result is that this former chapter now exists as a focus group under the auspices of a law firm called Friedman & Friedman, and no evidence suggests that there now is a functioning autonomous "chapter" on Long

Island with any association (except in name only) to the group formerly known as Fathers' Rights Association of New York State. No accessible reports are made to the press, there is no network of communication with other fathers' rights groups, and no news is ever submitted to even one of the national umbrella groups of the FRA's or MRA's.¹⁰

But before the Long Island chapter had even formed, FRANY of Manhattan had become strong enough that John Rossler, by late 1984 and early 1985, felt encouraged about forming a chapter in his home-town of Syracuse, believing that by now the difficulties that had split ERF would not infect a newly-formed chapter of Fathers' Rights Association of New York. So thus the Syracuse chapter was formed, but since John Rossler wanted to keep close ties with FRANY, the umbrella organization took the name Fathers' Rights Association of New York State. So now with this umbrella organization, and its chapters in Syracuse and Manhattan, plus an incipient chapter already being talked about for Long Island, the hope that one day there would be even more chapters felt more realistic. John Rossler was elected State Vice President (sometimes using the title, "Vice President, Public Relations") and a fellow

named Bruce Gerling was elected State President. This separation of powers occasioned some confusion since John Rossler was the group's spokesman and often did the public speaking, while Bruce Gerling did almost no public speaking, confining his activities to trenchant press releases and doing the day-to-day office work.¹¹

In truth, John's refusing to be president was an act of humility, and also it was an attempt to keep a low profile with the ERF people who before had opposed a lawsuit over diaper-changing facilities. Bruce had a humble attitude also. He did not consider himself a good public speaker. Also, because of his youth (four years younger than me—and having been born in 1948 I myself was several years younger than the others heading up the FRA's and MRA's) Bruce felt he would not garner respect from most of the other members who were older. So John was officially the vice president acting in the role of president, and Bruce was officially the president acting in the role of back-up man and office manager. The arrangement worked well.

THE LAWSUIT BEGINS:

GROUNDWORK, AND THE JULY 1985 FILING

Meanwhile, the possibility of going ahead with a lawsuit regarding diaper-changing facilities continued to stir John Rossler's activist personality (partly because I continued to nag him about it by phone).

As stated above, John had already been close personal friends with Karen DeCrow, national President of the National Organization for Women (NOW) from 1974 to 1977, and along with her private law practice, she was busy lobbying, working on media relations, doing public speaking, and helping with lawsuits, all on behalf of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). John discussed his desires for a diaper-changing lawsuit with Ms. DeCrow ("Karen" to most of us) and she expressed keen interest, wondering if some definitive data might be collected to show the extent to which diaper-changing facilities for men could be treated as an actual lack of parity rather than as an option only occasionally desired by a few particular men.

So John and Bruce, with the help of the enthusiastic membership of the Syracuse chapter of Fathers' Rights Association of New York State, came up with the idea of doing some research right there in Syracuse at the main

airport (Syracuse Hancock International Airport). So for part of one day, and most of the next day, Fathers' Rights Association members roamed the airport keeping count of how many fathers were doing the diaper changing while these members' wives (who could step into women's restrooms at will) kept a count of the women who were changing diapers. By the end of this small but carefully tallied study, a very surprising finding came to light. **More men than women were changing diapers!** No one could figure out why. Some suggested the men were doing the diaper changing because the mothers were watching the other kids, but I pointed out that dad could just as easily have been watching the other kids while mom changed the diapers. Besides, the observers of diaper-changing ratios had noted that men not only were doing more of the diaper changing, **they were clearly doing more of the child care than the moms were.** My theory, which I still believe is the most likely one, is that back then, in the mid-'80s, the men were still the primary wage-earners and arranging for travel tickets by plane could be a complicated process, best done by a stay-at-home mom who had the flexibility (if not the leisure) for making travel arrangements. The result was that when the family was at

the airport, mom had a need to stay close to the ticket counter and also watch the posted flight times and listen for the flight and boarding information that came out over the loudspeakers in the terminal. So she was the one who remained busy with travel arrangements there at the airport simply because she was the one who had initially taken on this role. Hence, when a diaper needed changing, dad did the duty because mom was monitoring minute-by-minute travel details.

But aside from the "whys" behind the situation, the data from this seminal and fertile study was in: at this airport, fathers were changing more diapers than women were. John Rossler, in conversation with me, several times referred to this 1&1/2-day study as a "survey" or as a "census," although in writing he referred to it as "research."¹²

Regardless of whether this little study was a census or merely a small compilation of data, and regardless of how scientifically rigorous it was, or how much breadth it had (after all, it was only one airport and the study took place over a period of only 1&1/2 days), what counted was the fact that it was data—however preliminary or

rudimentary. It was a small compendium of facts, and this was what Karen DeCrow felt she needed for the sake of bolstering the main argument of her case which would be that the lack of diaper-changing facilities for dads, by discriminating against men, broke a significant number of laws. Our initial and exploratory ideas were now coalescing into action. We would file a lawsuit. Almost a decade before the filing of this lawsuit I had come up with the idea of doing so. But (not so paradoxically) I was too busy being a parent to file a lawsuit on behalf of my rights as a parent. Instead, while changing a diaper in an airport's restroom at the sink, or on the floor in that airport, or on the floor in the back corner of a restaurant, I would grumble to myself, "There ought to be a law," or, "One of these days I'm going to sue those bastards." But back then I did not have ready access to a sympathetic lawyer, nor did I live in a big city. When I finally got around to discussing the possibility of doing something about the diaper-changing situation with John Rossler, he himself had been mulling over trying to find some kind of activist stance since about 1983. But even though he had spent much time talking this matter over with Tom Williamson, trying

to find an issue the men's movement could press a lawsuit over, they had not thought of this issue.

So I had presented a fertile and important issue, but now John suddenly seemed hesitant about going ahead with this diaper-changing lawsuit I was proposing. Instead he was more inclined toward media releases, lobbying, and interpersonal negotiations. John, always the friendly, charismatic optimist now wanted to believe that if we just nicely approached the right people about this issue, we could avoid a lawsuit and get what we wanted by diplomacy. I, who am never so optimistic about such matters, and am always litigiously inclined, wanted to go directly to the heart of the matter with a lawsuit. I had come up with the idea of suing an airport because I knew that any lawsuit against an airport would involve an action against the city they were in, their county, their state, and also the federal government. But my ideas as to who we should sue were ill-defined. I had considered Minneapolis because I flew in and out of there so much. Also I considered both Chicago and Atlanta because I used those airports too and also because they were such busy hubs. I also considered

the two New York City airports—John F. Kennedy International Airport and LaGuardia Airport: LGA.

Rossler's upsurge of reluctance about now pressing a lawsuit, and his preference for diplomacy, made me feel almost frantic. I knew we did not possess enough time for this kind of diplomacy. I pressed my point to John, made him listen as I tallied up the hours and expenses for just one visit to a single corporate executive, and also teased him a good deal about how he had so abruptly become the "alpha pacifist" of the men's liberation movement. And I pressed the point that this kind of diplomatic process would not come to fruition until we were very old men. Or dead.

Again, John's good nature won out. Now he wanted to please me. So when he took my suggestions regarding which airport we should consider suing to Karen DeCrow she was being offered a legal agenda that, if ambitious and focused in ideology, lacked specific direction regarding who we should sue. She immediately chose the airport in Syracuse as the best place to direct the lawsuit simply because both she and John lived in Syracuse. And as she explained, it didn't matter which airport we sued. All we needed to do

was win and thus establish legal precedent under the auspices of a major U.S. airport.

So as of this writing, it was a little less than a third of a century ago when we at last filed the lawsuit. This happened in July of 1985. It was either on July 9, or July 11, depending how one looks at the flow of legal machinations. The lawsuit was handed to the clerk of United States District Court, Northern District of New York on July 9, but the clerk did not actually enter the lawsuit into the official court docket until July 11; hence the two-day discrepancy in dates which some people have wondered about or even quibbled about. The official case number was (and is): 85-cv-972.

Basically the lawsuit alleged that the City of Syracuse, New York, was liable in that this city, as administrator of the Syracuse Airport, was in violation of both State and Federal law in failing to provide child-care facilities for men similar to the facilities women already had ready access to. The specifics of these violations were spelled out in legal jargon, with a summation by Karen DeCrow, our attorney, stating that with regard to restrooms, changing stations, or nurseries, "Most of these

facilities are government owned, government sponsored, and/or government maintained. They are creating and enforcing sex discrimination, which is prohibited by federal laws, many state laws, and a wide variety of regulations, which prohibit sex discrimination in public accommodations"13

The legal action which I, in a grim and grumpy state of mind, had pondered and plotted eight years before was finally in action. A major press conference took place in Syracuse on July 11, and it was attended by reporters and the general public. Several members of Fathers' Rights Association of New York State had predicted that people would mainly come to snicker. But no one snickered. Quite the contrary, both the press and the general public were sympathetic and keenly interested.

Even today people ask me what "inspired" us to press the lawsuit. I explain that there is not one bit of inspiration involved when you are changing a dirty diaper. Not inspiration, but anger, is what motivated us, and anger would better be described as a goad rather than as an inspiration. There also is the fact that none of us, including Karen DeCrow, really thought we would win. So why

did we nevertheless go ahead with the lawsuit? Karen DeCrow, typical of her personality as an attorney and also a women's liberationist, pressed the lawsuit on behalf of men's legal rights because of her beliefs regarding gender parity. But typical of the sense of social vision which also characterized Karen DeCrow's personality, she many times emphasized the fact that children themselves have a right to hands-on caring by both parents. This way they can grow up not only having received this kind of intimacy from both parents, they also can grow up practicing what they received. Then they can pass on this ideology (and practice) to their own children. And even if our lawsuit were to fail in the end, it nevertheless would raise women's consciousness—they would begin to become aware that being the sole caregiver for children can be a form of servitude, limiting their options for exploring careers, and limiting their time for other avenues of self-fulfillment. So in Karen's mind, even if we lost, awareness of the case by women, and the way this lawsuit might affect the way parents would look at their duties regarding parenting their children, would at least be one more step in the direction of moving toward liberating everybody.

I should confess that, as the lawsuit began moving into the stage of meetings with attorneys on the other side, and as Karen, in the speeches she gave while on her travels, began alluding to the diaper-changing lawsuit, I allowed a concern to come up in myself which I gave considerable attention to. I would not be fair to myself in calling this concern a suspicion, but it certainly was a worry. I trusted Karen DeCrow's good intentions completely, but I did not completely trust her ability to keep those intentions focused on the spirit of the original lawsuit. She had our interests in mind, but as a women's liberationist **it was clear that she was giving more attention to how equal diaper-changing facilities would help liberate women than to how it would help liberate men from the constraints which kept them from playing an equal parenting role. This was understandable, given that her life work had primarily been in women's liberation. But if her understandable inclinations toward women's liberation worried me, this was mainly because I feared that, just as I earlier noted how many of the men's rights activists were what one would call "single-issue" men who gave only passing attention to the other issues of men's liberation,**

so also, Karen DeCrow, who could accurately be described as a single-issue women's liberationist, might lead us down her path which would not prove helpful to our primary issue. Her stint as national president of NOW from 1974 to 1977 had certainly pushed her in the direction of keeping abreast of all the issues in women's liberation, but the single issue which received her focused attention was the Equal Rights Amendment. The ERA was where her heart was and where her legal work focused. Her many travels involved legal work, speeches, and media appearances in other states. Almost all of these had to do with the ERA. My concern was that before long Karen would somehow take the diaper-changing issue, as well as the lawsuit, and shove it into the broader agenda of the ERA, which was from my perspective a legitimate issue but also a legal thicket as impenetrable as it was ephemeral. I was sure that if ERA activism started including the diaper-changing issue, then this issue would be swallowed up in the broader spectrum of ERA activities and become insignificant, get neglected, or even be forgotten.

To Karen DeCrow's credit this never happened. However I do not think my worries were completely unfounded, and I

think it was the combination of my tactful scrutiny, the hints I sent John Rossler's way, and her friendship with John Rossler that kept this possibility so remote it never came close to becoming actual.

HOW WE PERSISTED, DESPITE OUR PESSIMISM

If Karen had her ideological, and legal, reasons for moving ahead with the diaper-changing lawsuit even though most of us thought we would lose, we men had our own reasons for wanting to vigorously press the lawsuit even though we thought we would lose.

One reason we went ahead was that a few—a very few—men thought we actually would win. John Rossler, evincing his usual amiable optimism, was one of those who believed we would win. Part of what endeared him to so many was his unshakable belief in the goodness of humanity, and this belief transferred to our lawsuit. He thought the goodness of humanity would somehow conspire with the benign forces of the cosmos in a way that would, in the end, give us a victory.

Others of us, despite our pessimism, were eager to press the lawsuit for practical reasons. We thought it would provide a means for learning all the legal aspects of such a lawsuit, and even though we would lose on our first foray, maybe in ten years or so we could press the lawsuit again. At that point, with experience behind us, and working in a society we hoped would by then be more open to such a lawsuit, we would have a better chance of winning. So we thought of our lawsuit as doomed this time around, but at least pressing the suit would be a "practice run" (or, as some men called it, a "dry run") that would give us valuable experience which might help us attain a win in the future.

Other men (especially those of a more political bent—Tom Williamson was one of them) although they believed we would lose, thought that the lawsuit would have valuable and immediate side-benefits. We would, as a men's movement, get more attention from the press. We could also hope to draw new members into our men's rights and fathers' rights groups. These people also thought that if we carefully presented the case as men wanting to be more involved parents (and not just wanting to even the score legally

because of our anger) then we men's liberationists would get more support from society for all of our issues.

A fourth reason is harder to give a name to, but I suspect it was the main reason which kept us involved, enthusiastic, and vigorous even when most of us fully believed we would lose. **This factor involved what some people might call machismo. We pushed forward because we are men.** We had to prove that nothing could stop us. Our dogged determination, our belief that when the going gets tough the tough get going, our stubborn persistence—all these factors were what kept us going despite our belief that, in the end, we would lose. However, while a kind of macho stubbornness was certainly motivating us, I myself believe that our determination came more from momentum than from machismo. Our work in the men's movement had been going on for so long it had become just plain habit. We kept going because at this point we didn't know how to stop. We had been doing this work for so long, doing it on a strictly volunteer basis, sacrificing time at our main jobs and even time with our families, that we just kept doggedly slogging on. Defeat? So what. Our job was to keep on keeping on.

RAISING THE NECESSARY LEGAL FUNDS

So at last we were at work with our lawsuit, and Fathers' Rights Association of New York State was the plaintiff. Many men around the country were enthusiastically lending their moral support, but there was one impediment: money. Karen DeCrow, sympathetic though she was, could not afford to do the case pro bono. She would have to be paid. The question of fees had not even been discussed at first. This was an oversight on our part. We had been so clumsily undiplomatic as to impose on Karen considerable embarrassment at being put in the delicate position of needing to tell us that we would have to pay her. So it was a sudden and sobering realization, but this need for money was not going to deter us. We in the fathers' rights movement, and the more general men's rights movement, were already "spread thin" with our monetary resources since we were committed to so many different men's rights causes. So we needed a basis by which to ask potential donors for contributions, and we knew that

contributions are more readily forthcoming when they are tax deductible.

Since Fathers' Rights Association of New York State was relatively new, what with its recent birth after the demise of John Rossler's Equal Rights for Fathers, it was not incorporated as a nonprofit organization with a 501(c)(3) status. **This is where the Coalition of Free Men got involved in a formal way.** Since I was already working closely with John Rossler, I suggested that since CFM already had 501(c)(3) status, we could set ourselves up as the entity for receiving funds on behalf of the lawsuit and we would hold the money until it was needed for disbursement. I suggested to John Rossler that he contact CFM's president Tom Williamson about this, he did, Tom agreed, and so the funds came in—at a more generous pace than we had anticipated.

WHY THERE WAS ONLY ONE PLAINTIFF

Many people have asked me, and Tom Williamson, why we did not take political advantage of this situation by becoming co-plaintiffs in the lawsuit, thus gaining more

media attention for the Coalition of Free Men. The answer is quite simple, but involves being aware that the world was very different in some crucial ways back in 1985. Communication was difficult, slow, and expensive. There was no FAX, no Internet, no email. Express mail was always an option but it was expensive. Phone calls were difficult because few people had answering machines, and phone calls also were expensive. Back in those days, a long-distance call from New York to Missouri lasting half an hour could cost between \$20 and \$45 depending on the time of day and the day of the week. All these impediments meant expensive delays. Many lawyers would not have minded such delays. In fact, most lawyers welcome any opportunity for dragging their feet since this allows them to accumulate more "billable hours." But Karen was not this type of attorney. She wasn't greedy, plus she wanted the lawsuit over and done with as soon as possible so she could concentrate on her ERA work. Hence she did not want to slow the lawsuit down, and she did not want to "clutter" the lawsuit (to use her word) with the delays of postal mail and the problems with phone calls. So the Coalition of Free Men, although holding hands with Fathers' Rights Association of New York

State in this lawsuit, did not join in as co-plaintiff because Karen DeCrow wanted to keep things moving faster and more simply.

THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION

Also it is important to realize that no one organization was considering itself the torchbearer of this lawsuit. We all, as fathers or as men with an interest in fathers' rights, were working together. The very issue—babies with dirty diapers—helped keep any sense of macho competition or ego involvement out of the picture. The self-defeating egotism that too often had come up in the men's movement, when men tried to go it alone (or even preferred to go it alone so as to "get all the glory"), simply did not fit into a diaper-changing scenario. Stated simply, there was no alpha male nor was there anyone competing to be the alpha male. Some men naturally came to the fore, e.g., John Rossler (because of his hard work, public appearances, and genteel charisma), and Bruce Gerling (because his meticulous work garnered so many people's respect). But if indeed such people occupied what

can be called leadership positions, this is because they were just naturally playing out their accepted roles. They were acknowledged as leaders because of their abilities and hard labor, not because they had competed to become leaders, much less because they were posturing as leaders.

THE PUBLIC MOOD TURNS AGAINST US

All of us soon had reason to remember the split that had happened back in 1983 and 1984 in Equal Rights for Fathers. The men opposed to the diaper-changing issue had often voiced the concern that they did not want to give society one more thing to criticize men about. Although we had filed the lawsuit in early July, and had had a press conference on July 11 which was well attended by a sympathetic media and public, it nevertheless happened that within days the public mood was obviously turning sour.

One has to keep in mind that people do not easily accept change, especially when this change involves gender roles. We were discovering that even with a matter as mundane and primal as who changes a diaper, social change makes people insecure, it gets them riled, they protest.

I have already referred to the fracas in Legal Beagle between Richard Doyle, president of Men's Rights Association, and John Rossler, Vice-president but de facto leader of Fathers' Rights Association of New York State. And I have already set forth in this book a goodly portion from the lengthy article I wrote back then which involved giving my own perspective and trying to calm the waters between Doyle and Rossler. **Doyle considered the diaper-changing issue frivolous and an assault on our manhood while Rossler considered it part of fathers' desires to parent their children.** I considered it a matter of practical convenience which I had been deprived of when I was a traveling single parent, so I had a personal stake in how fathers' rights were involved—the right to parent in an environment as convenient as the one women have.

Richard Doyle, the pre-eminent leader of the conservative faction of the fathers' rights movement, was opposed to the diaper-changing issue being an issue at all, and his opposition was based on conservative ideology. **But the average man in society tended to be opposed because he felt it was "a woman's job" and not a role he had any desire to take over.** Nor did such men see that society

might benefit if fathers began taking over the role of diaper changing. We were called child molesters, sickos, wimps, and a common accusation which came from many people was, "Are you trying to grow a vagina?" (or) "Are you trying to grow tits?"

Karen DeCrow always had a cheerful response to the accusation that men wanting these rights must be child molesters. She would simply reply with something like, "If a man wanted to molest his own child, don't you think he would find a more convenient and anonymous place for doing it than in a public restroom?" John Rossler, with his admixture of amiability and charisma, would reason mildly with people and usually succeed in calming them down even if he did not bring them over to his way of thinking. I, who am more combative in such situations, often got into a futile argument which would leave me angry and fuming, and leave the other person only all the more convinced that here is a good example of someone proving that only a weird man would want to change his baby's diaper.

Eventually I would learn that people were not going to be swayed by arguments. If they were going to be swayed this would come about because of time and gradual exposure

to new societal norms. But before I finally learned that my way of arguing was futile, I advanced many examples and scenarios trying to show that changing a diaper does not strip a man of his manhood. Amongst these many arguments there were two I mainly relied on.

The first approach was to try and patiently explain that changing a diaper does not at all strip a man of his manhood precisely because changing a diaper, if not a monumental task, is nevertheless at times a thoroughly unpleasant job. So one should consider that it is one of the traits of a real man that he isn't afraid to get his hands dirty. No job is too tough for him. If a dirty diaper is indeed a dirty job, well, so what? That's the kind of thing a real man does with a shrug of the shoulders. So don't level the accusation that changing a diaper strips a father of his manhood. The fact that he is willing to go ahead and do it, without protest, without thinking that it's a big deal, is simply a reflection of his being a real man. Give him a place to do the job, stand back and stay out of his way while he does it, and when he's through you'll notice that he's still a real man. And if you are so naive or foolish as to suggest otherwise, you might be

unfortunate enough to learn that he can do things with his hands that are less delicate than changing a baby's diaper.

This argument got people's attention. It usually shut them up. At least temporarily. But I knew it didn't change their minds. And sometimes I actually saw them smirk when they thought I didn't see.

My second approach involved an argument that involved giving an example. I knew a fellow named Bill Martin who worked for the electric company. He was a trouble-shooting specialist, which meant he did the jobs nobody else could solve. It also meant he was one of the people out there repairing critical lines that had been knocked out. For example, if the "feed line" going to a hospital or a police station had been blown down in a storm or got knocked down by a vehicle hitting a pole, he was the one who went up the ladder on a ladder-truck and ever so carefully did the repair. Often, in a storm, he would have to do this even while it was still raining. Once he was knocked off his ladder by an electric jolt but wasn't hurt because he fell in soft mud. He went back up the ladder and finished the job. Twice he was knocked off a pole by a jolt. Both of those times he was somewhat hurt but he kept on working.

How many men are man enough to do a job that difficult and dangerous? This guy obviously was as tough as they come, and there is no way the mere task of changing a diaper could strip any manhood from a fellow who is willing to climb up amidst live electric wires during a rainstorm. All this was born out by the way he lived his life. He changed the diapers of his own children, and later of his grandchildren. If any man would dare think to himself that when Bill Martin changed a diaper it was depriving him of his manhood, then that man should ask if he himself is man enough to climb up that ladder in freezing rain on a pitch-black night and try to fix a snaggle of high-voltage electric wires that have been knocked out by the wind. Any man who isn't man enough to do that has no right to criticize Bill Martin on the grounds that he is sacrificing his manhood by changing a dirty diaper.

Simply put, changing a dirty diaper is a gender-neutral job. A woman can do it without that making her more of a woman. A man can do it without that making him less of a man.

But the criticisms kept coming from both men and women. The men usually were at least polite enough to keep their

opinions to themselves, or if they did state them, they kept it brief. But the women? Their reactions ranged from tongue-clucking disapproval to outright rage and they seldom seemed to possess any inhibitions about expressing what they felt. **If there were men who criticized us, there were women who cursed and vilified us.** Karen DeCrow had gone in to this lawsuit looking upon those diaper-changing stations for men as a way of helping liberate women who were tethered to the role of child-rearing. But few women were willing to see it this way. They found the lawsuit a threat to their feminine identity. The lawsuit threatened their hegemony over child-rearing. They might feel oppressed by the role, but it was familiar to them, and it was theirs and they were not going to give up a role they felt that they owned. They not only cursed us behind our backs, they cursed us to our faces. And they came up with some of the strangest arguments. Several women advanced the view that there are men who "hang out" in men's restrooms who are "sickos"—perverts just hoping to get a look at a naked baby. Therefore a baby's diaper should never be changed in a men's restroom. I countered this view by saying that as a man I had spent a whole lot more time in

men's restrooms than they had, and I had never once seen anyone standing in there as if he was hoping to look at a naked baby. Moreover, I had never read about any diagnosis of pedophilia which extended so far as to mention men who find it stimulating to watch a naked baby's messy diaper being changed. But these women, more hysterical than empirical, were not to be swayed from their view. They would continue to believe that men who are sickos (or "sickies") spend time in men's restrooms just hoping to get a look at a naked baby being changed. Even members of my extended family warned me that this kind of men's liberation work was going to expose innocent young babies to weirdos. My own mother said, "Men's restrooms are where bums camp out." I told her I had only once seen someone who looked like a bum camping out in a men's restroom, and he was obviously staying in there because it was cold outside, and he was eating something. He was standing inside a stall, and when I saw him through the partly open door (which was missing its latch), he seemed much more embarrassed than on the sexual prowl. "But what else would he have to do when he finished eating?" my mother persisted. I answered, "Keep hiding, so he wouldn't get

thrown back outside in the cold." She then resorted to the method of arguing she was famous for: pouting silence. At some point, against these accusations by women that any man changing a diaper is a potential child molester, I simply used an argument similar to Karen DeCrow's—that surely a man who wants to molest his child could find a more convenient and private place to do it than in a public restroom. Unlike Karen DeCrow, I would sometimes add sarcastically, "Since when does a messy diaper set the mood for sex?" I don't know if it was my statement, or my sarcasm, that gave people pause. But that is all it gave. Pause. Then they would quickly recover themselves and commence their accusations—usually in the form of a tirade.

What was hardest, with these women, was when they didn't argue. Instead they criticized right while I was doing the diaper changing. I noticed that they would always wait to get involved until I had finished with the dirty work. Then, just as I began putting the clean diaper on (I used the old-fashioned cloth diapers that required pins) they would rush forward, grabbing the pins from my hands, showing me how to pin in a way that would not stick my little daughter (I don't think I ever stuck her even once

doing it my way), telling me I was awkward, that I wasn't getting it on right, and I needed a woman in my life to do this sort of thing.

"She wouldn't have time," I once joked to this not uncommon observation. "She would be outside overhauling the engine in my pickup."

"No woman's ever going to marry a man who changes his baby's diaper."

"So until I marry the woman who will change my daughter's diaper, who's going to change these dirty diapers?"

"Hire someone to do it."

In other words, hire a stay-at-home babysitter. Or a nanny to travel with me and care for my daughter when I am on the road with my work.

But I was already working (and earning) less because of the demands of being a single parent. I couldn't have afforded that much child-care help. So I did it my way, and I kept hearing the redundant (and insulting) words, "You aren't doing it right!"

At some point I just quit arguing. I was aware that men were smirking. I couldn't ignore women who were voicing

their loud criticisms right at me when I was changing my daughter's diaper. But I didn't argue anymore. I was preparing a book on men's liberation for publication, I was helping other men with divorce and custody issues by lobbying Missouri legislators, working with the media, and by giving direct assistance to fathers when they were in the courtroom. At this point in my life my daughter had done a lot of growing (and I had done a lot of growing old-or so it seemed), I had better things to do than argue with dogmatic prejudice and shrill tongues.

Nevertheless, while the diaper-changing lawsuit was in process I continued to monitor how it was proceeding, extending advice and occasional guidance to the legal team (Karen DeCrow, another attorney, and a young but very effective man who I presumed was her legal aide), and helping other men maintain enthusiasm for the lawsuit when virtually none of us thought we would win.

Meanwhile the lawyers were doing their legal scuffling. The preliminary results of these scuffles would involve many an appearance before the judge. Most of these appearances were quite brief, lasting but a few minutes and usually inserted as an interruption of another proceeding

in process—the result being that the minutiae of all these appearances (“minutiae” which often amounted to colossal results!) did not go on the court docket or record nor were they written up by a court recorder. It did happen, however, that these proceedings (or “pretrial hearings” as they were called) were resulting in both “preliminary” wins and “preliminary” losses.

All this time I was being a busy parent, and I was feeling overwhelmed with my commitments to other men’s liberation issues. Plus I was trying to have a career, be a parent, and be a husband to my second wife. At this point I myself began getting discouraged and was wondering what in the world had possessed me to turn my disgruntlement with not having diaper-changing facilities into a legal battle. I was being buried by the work-load.

WE WON!

(AMIDST A LEGAL LABYRINTH OF SMALL VICTORIES)

My work-load included the fact that I was busy being a men’s liberationist in Missouri all the while those legal machinations, involving the diaper-changing issue, were

proceeding through a labyrinth of legal maneuvers in New York. The many appearances before Judge Munson, albeit relatively informal and therefore not on the court docket, were slowly coalescing into more crucial appearances before Judge Munson, all of which would soon garner an adjudication before the judge, approved by the judge, and therefore binding, all to the effect that the plaintiff (ourselves) had won!

However, all this was happening in the courtroom and in the lawyers' offices. These many details were not communicated to "us laymen" until the lawyers were sure that the agreement was clear and final.

Then they told us.

We won!

Yes; in April of 1986 the news came in. There had already been rumors that a deal was being worked out, that both sides had reached a point where they were negotiating amiably—not toward a win for Fathers' Rights Association of New York State, but about the details of this win which was already presumed.

WHAT WE GOT—CONCRETELY

Because this news had come out in small bits, and not all matters being agreed upon were presented before the judge, it is difficult to pinpoint an exact date for our win. The truth is, there never was an exact date. Rather, it was a slow process of patient but persistent bargaining and reconciliation, happening in steps that were minimal and incremental. To try to name an exact date would be like asking a person at what precise date they went from being an adolescent to being a young adult. But it was clear that by April of 1986 the City of Syracuse had agreed to begin construction of diaper-changing facilities for men at the airport.¹⁴ An offer had been made initially, by the opposition, to set up a diaper-changing table in the men's restroom, but we had turned down this offer on the grounds that it was a minimal gesture compared to the more elaborate and convenient diaper-changing facilities in the women's restroom. So the City of Syracuse agreed to reconfigure, in a simple way, access to the diaper-changing facilities that already existed as part of the women's restroom. The entrance to those facilities, from within the women's restroom, was blocked off while a public entrance

to those diaper-changing facilities from outside both restrooms was created by cutting a new door-way into the wall by the women's restroom which both men and women could use—bypassing the women's restroom so women could retain their privacy. This way not only moms but also dads could use the existing diaper-changing facilities. These facilities were given a slight upgrade over what they were previously which included installing a sink next to the diaper-changing table and a complete repainting. So now the facility was in place. One common entrance for both men and women, the same amenities for both men and women, the same care and attention given to babies by both men and women. By many of us involved in this lawsuit, this win—this tangible child-care facility shared by both men and women—was considered a nice Father's Day present for all of us given that in April of 1986 the construction was in process and Father's Day would occur on June 15—the third Sunday in June—of that year.¹⁵

The fact that we had won was difficult to even believe. The lawyers had done it all. The opposition had capitulated, and now we could breathe a sigh of relief. The final settlement papers had not yet been signed, but the

lawyers had appeared before the judge many times, and the settlement—which amounted to a capitulation by the defendant—was set forth verbally and approved by the judge (which makes it binding). So since this lawsuit had been filed on July 9 or 11 of 1985, and considering that construction of this new facility had begun in April of 1986, and the fact that it was tangibly and concretely (so to speak) finished about July 5 (since the published report stating that this facility was now completed came out in the newspaper on July 12, 1986, and this report stated that the completion was finished about a week before this newspaper report, meaning it was completed about July 5¹⁶), putting all these dates in place means that within 9 months of our filing the lawsuit we had won and in a little under 12 months our win had resulted in a revamping of facilities so that what we had sued for was now in place! It was an actuality! We had won our case in less than a year!

My main reaction was not a sense of relief. Everything seemed anti-climactic. Almost surreal. This case had settled nine months after it was filed. I had been involved in several other lawsuits which had dragged on for what seemed like an infinity of years. And now this case—which

involved the city, county, state, and even the federal government—had settled in less than a year? Already I was wondering--what do we do next? How do we enforce this win, not only in New York State, but also in other states? And at other airports? And at other businesses too? Karen DeCrow made a public statement: "I assume that every airport in the country will follow suit."¹⁷ And indeed one airport did follow suit very quickly. This came about because a fellow named Sam Colombo, a State Legislator from Rochester, New York who represented Monroe County, happened to be in the Syracuse airport in March of that year when a preliminary diaper-changing table had been put in the men's restroom—the very table that Fathers' Rights Association of New York State would deem unacceptable with regard to what they were suing for since it did not at all match the facilities the women next door possessed for changing their babies. At the time, the Monroe County Airport was undergoing a 60-million-dollar renovation and Mister Colombo decided that since our society had now moved into the relatively (sic) enlightened 1980s, it was time to treat men as equal parents. He thereupon succeeded in getting a resolution passed requiring that the new

renovations for the Monroe County Airport include equal diaper-changing facilities for both genders.¹⁸

It also happened that, through the personal contacts and negotiations of John Rossler, the Albany airport in New York was already moving into the planning stages for doing something similar to what had been accomplished at the Syracuse airport.¹⁹

But I knew Karen had been too optimistic in her belief that "every airport in the country will follow suit." Most other airports would not even know about our win. And even if they did, people often do not comply with the law until they are forced to.

WHY AND HOW WE WON

At the present I wanted to better understand how things had settled so quickly. All along Karen DeCrow and her legal staff had been aware that the opposition's legal team actually wanted us to win. Their personal sympathies were on our side. This didn't mean they were any less aggressive about pursuing a win. Lawyers are like that. For them any case is like a game of poker. Each game and every hand of

cards counts—and in this part of the legal competition winning is all that counts. After a deposition, while the attorneys on both sides might enjoy a convivial and jovial lunch together, the moment that amiable lunch is over the combat resumes. In our case, during those lunches the opposing attorneys were sometimes willing to share what they really felt, everyone voiced their personal opinions, and on the diaper-changing issue the opposing attorneys sometimes would openly admit their sympathies to our attorneys. At the same time, they didn't think we would win and neither did our attorneys. Still, the opposition was sympathetic, and if this sympathy failed to curb their lust for legal combat at the start of the fracas, I believe their sympathies did come through, at first without their being quite aware of it, and before long, partly because of the amiable and charismatic presence of John Rossler, their sympathies were less inhibited and more overt. Thereafter the atmosphere of competition and combat began dissolving and soon disappeared entirely. By the end, the opposition—the defendant—even wanted to give the impression that there had never been any real opposition to the plaintiff: "The discussions were very cordial. We just kicked it around and

came up with a plan,' said Assistant Corporation Counsel Lee Alcott, who represented the city in the case."²⁰

So I must note that the mere presence of John Rossler's personality not only helped keep the waters calm during the initial sparring done by the attorneys on both sides, John Rossler also inclined everyone in the direction of a congenial settlement as negotiations proceeded.

A second factor which contributed to our winning was because most of the people on the other side were fathers. Not only the attorneys, but also the VIPs at the airport who were keeping a close eye on the legal proceedings, felt they had some degree of vested interest in those diaper-changing facilities being installed. Even when they were the kind of fathers who might swear they would never change a diaper, they nevertheless felt that "fair's fair" and if women have the right to such facilities then men should too.

A third factor was the clarity of existing laws. Since the airport did not have the diaper-changing facilities which we the plaintiff were asking for they were clearly breaking these laws. Still, society's prejudices about the matter were well in place. We all were fully aware of this;

hence, we all thought there was no way the plaintiff (Fathers' Rights Association of New York State) would win. But it did cause everybody on the other side—lawyers and the VIPs at the airport—to be distracted from achieving the bargaining momentum they otherwise might have been reaching for. The opposition knew full well that even if they won now, the day could soon come when people would be judging them as having been in the wrong, and a future lawsuit very well might judge similarly.

Also there was a fourth factor. By the time the new construction at the airport was finished, "The renovations, which were completed about a week ago, cost \$3,200, according to Ralph Napolitano, deputy commissioner of aviation."²¹ There is no way of knowing for sure, but I suspect that the attorney's fees incurred by the City of Syracuse were about three times that much by the time the settlement had occurred. If they had not settled the case, the attorneys could well have accrued enough hours to warrant astronomical fees even if, in the end, they won. In other words, I suspect a settlement was vastly cheaper than a victory, the executives at the airport were fully aware

of this, and so advised their attorneys toward the cheaper approach.

The result was that, in the end, the attorneys settled quietly and walked away with their male egos intact, satisfied with their many "wins" in the depositions and negotiations, and also privately satisfied that when all was settled and done they had even succeeded in "doing the right thing."

At this point, in order to help the reader better understand the sequence of events (and also in order to help historians of the future avoid confusion when they are looking over the legal documents and the media reports about this case), the many legal specifics of this case warrant here being set forth in the temporal sequence of what happened when. There were informal legal agreements, public celebrations covered by the media, and formal legal documents. Some of these matters overlap in ways that might appear to be confusing if the particulars are not set forth exactly and comprehensively.

*****SUMMARY*****

**July 9, 1985: Fathers Rights' Association, Inc., of New York State (FRA) filed suit against Hancock International Airport of Syracuse, New York. On the court docket the plaintiff is listed as: Fathers' Rights Association of New York State and the defendant is listed as: City of Syracuse, Department of Aviation.

**July 11, 1985 is the actual date the above lawsuit was placed on the court docket since there was a two-day hiatus between when the lawsuit was handed to the court clerk and the clerk filed the lawsuit. A summons to the defendant was prepared and issued so it could subsequently be served.²²

**July 15, 1985: The summons for the defendant was served to Eugene Marjinski, who received it because his status was comptroller for the defendant: the City of Syracuse, Department of Aviation.

**August 5, 1985: A "Verified Answer" by the defendant was filed.

**August 12, 1985: The July 15, 1985 summons was filed and placed on the court docket.

**December 2, 1985: Per "Rule 16" there was placed on the court docket a summary that the lawsuit involved a "Settlement in Progress" and "if case is not settled in 90 days" the Clerk per "Rule 16" would place the lawsuit on the court docket for a hearing, i.e., trial, that would commence in April of 1986.

[Note: These specific dates were punctuated with many interchanges between the attorneys on both sides of the lawsuit involving preliminary negotiations and proposals. Also there were many informal appearances before the judge apprising him of the fact that the settlement was indeed in progress, that the pace of this progress was satisfactory to both sides of the lawsuit, the result being that the judge trusted the veracity of the attorneys on both sides and allowance was made for extra negotiating time. Hence, the next appearance on the court docket is much later than 90 days after December 2, 1985 as had been stipulated.]

**In April of 1986 the case was settled by oral agreement before Judge Howard Munson in United States District Court: Southern District of New York. [Such oral agreements are considered binding per the authority of the presiding judge, although since they are not set forth in

final legal documentation, they can neither be registered as finalized nor stipulated as legal precedent in another lawsuit which might want to refer to the case or even use it as supportive and authoritative legal precedent.]

Thereupon construction began on the reconfiguration of the restrooms and diaper-changing facilities.

****About July 5 of 1986 construction of these new facilities was finished.**

****About three months later, with enthusiasm and the flush of victory running high, members of Fathers' Rights Association of New York State participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Syracuse Hancock International Airport in front of the new gender-free fathers' and mothers' nursery. The media were present, many members with their children attended, and two of these children were infants who got their diapers changed on camera. In a symbolic (and touching) symbol of the recent reconciliation, one of the infants was the child of an attorney for the defendant, and the other was the child of FRA's local president!²³**

****May 14, 1987: After considerable procrastination by attorneys on both sides, on this date the case was placed**

on the court "Dismissal" docket, meaning that all those earlier informal presentations that had been orally heard were now set forth in a carefully drawn-up summation which compressed those pre-trial hearings into a precise opinion and specific judgement. Except for the issue of attorney's fees, and and final paperwork, the case was considered finished. So now the action was officially adjudicated and promulgated as having been legally settled. The plaintiff, Fathers' Rights Association of New York State, filed a motion pressing to collect attorney's fees. (Such fees are often awarded to the victor on the grounds that winning the case means the other side is liable because they were the cause of an injustice that had to be rectified.)

****March 2, 1988:** In an "open court hearing" Judge Munson reviewed all the paperwork which represented in a written summation what had been presented on May 14, 1987. Making sure that it accurately represented what had transpired, he decided that indeed it was accurate, signed off on it, declared a "Dismissal" of the lawsuit in its "entirety" and directed the Clerk to enter judgement accordingly. Attorney's fees were denied to the plaintiff on the grounds that, given the existing laws and customs of

the time, the City of Syracuse, Department of Aviation had been acting in "good faith" and had not shown resistance—much less hostile resistance—to the remedies being pressed for in the lawsuit.

****March 7, 1988:** The results of the March 2, 1988 open court hearing, now written up by Judge Munson's secretary, were officially filed as a JUDGEMENT and thus the case was officially DISMISSED as settled and finished.

March, 1988: A few days after the above JUDGEMENT was filed an NBC news crew came to the Syracuse airport to cover the entire story. Karen DeCrow was interviewed extensively by NBC's Deborah Norville, sound was managed by Michael Stewart, video was managed by Warren Jones, and the show was produced by Warren Lewis.²⁴ This production was a small part—a segment—of a 90-minute documentary that would be aired later in the summer by NBC.²⁵ Very conspicuous was the sign on the wall outside the nursery facility which read:

A FATHERS' AND MOTHERS' NURSERY

This facility is provided for the
convenience of Mothers and Fathers

traveling with infant children

City of Syracuse

Thomas G. Young, Mayor

The win was complete, material evidence showed that the potty parity issue (at least in the Syracuse airport) was resolved, and now we could (as attorneys say) "take it to the next step."

It bears mention here that I myself was crucial in moving this lawsuit to its final settlement. Already John Rossler and I had been aware that after winning this lawsuit, we likely would proceed to press similar lawsuits against other businesses, and also we were wanting to get other fathers' rights groups to use our win as legal precedent for filing lawsuits of their own which would press for equality with diaper-changing facilities. I had, after the May 14, 1987 decision been holding the perspective that now our case could be used as legal precedent. But then it came out by happenstance, when I was talking with one of Karen DeCrow's legal staff, that I discovered our case had no standing as legal precedent until all legal papers were prepared, filed, and approved

by the judge. I was stunned and dismayed when I then found out that not one bit of this final work had been done.

I learned all this in late January of 1988, promptly contacted John Rossler, and in an agitated state of mind did some ranting about the typical tendency of attorneys to procrastinate doing their job. He calmed me down and promised to phone Karen DeCrow which he did. She then phoned her office and set in motion preparations of the final papers. She had been leaving this work up to her legal staff, which as far as I could tell consisted of a receptionist/secretary, an attorney who was some kind of subsidiary partner, and another fellow who may have been an attorney but seemed to be a legal aide. (I was too polite to ask him his status.) The responsibilities of preparing these final papers had been placed in the hands of these three people. Karen, who was busy with her ERA work, had not given the final details her own attention, but now her phone call set those three people at her office in motion. So now the case would (still tardily, and too slowly, in my opinion, especially since the attorneys on the other side were just as inclined toward procrastination as before whereas ours now were not procrastinating because Karen

DeCrow had ordered them not to) begin moving toward the final settlement "on paper" which at long last happened on March 7, 1988.

Summed up, the suit had been filed on either May 9 or May 11 (depending on how you prefer to assign importance to one of the two dates), 1985; it was settled by oral agreement and made a tangible actuality in April through July of 1986; and on March 7 of 1988, by official JUDGEMENT, the case was finally settled "on paper" by order of Judge Munson and "DISMISSED in its entirety" in the United States District Court: Northern District of New York.

LEGAL SUMMARY CONCLUDED

I remember being so ungrateful I actually resented that matters had not worked out so that I could say we had won completely—even on paper—in less than a year. Shame on me.

But this small impulse soon passed, and I was glad for something else. Namely, my resentment over the lack of access to convenient diaper-changing facilities for men, which had begun way back in 1977, had resulted in a lawsuit that had been filed in 1985 long after my daughter was out of diapers, and even though that lawsuit would not be completely settled until six months before she became a teenager, it had indeed settled and we had actually won. It had been a long wait, a huge amount of work, and a great deal of sleep lost because of all that work. But we had won! We had gained the nursery at the airport back in summer of 1986. Now we had attained legal standing, which could serve as legal precedent for any such future cases, and all this was our gift to other parents and their children. The case would benefit fathers, it would help children grow up to be more egalitarian, and right now it would start the process of liberating women from the oppressive role of being the presumed caregiver in this particular child-care situation. Or, stated simply, women would have fewer diapers to change.

PAYING THE BILL

Meanwhile there was another difficulty to take care of. Karen DeCrow had made it clear that she would have to charge us for her services in this lawsuit. Hence, the hard work by Tom Williamson, president of the Coalition of Free Men to legally channel funds from donors through the CFM treasury to Fathers' Rights Association of New York State, meant that money was there to pay our attorney. But since Judge Munson, in that final judgement in March of 1988, had denied our request for attorney's fees we were wondering: Did we have sufficient funds? The monetary arrangement with Karen DeCrow had been set forth rather informally, so we did not know what to expect by way of a bill. We were vastly relieved to find out that it was much less than we had anticipated. Neither I nor John Rossler, nor anyone else associated with the case, now remember the exact amount but all of us are in agreement that it was less than ten-thousand dollars. Karen's fee was generous to us, so we were able to afford it, but barely.

Still, there persisted one simple fact: We won! We had to broadcast this to the media.

CELEBRATING, MEDIA RELEASES,
PREPARING FOR THE NEXT STEP

We sent out press releases, doing our best to inform the world that now, because of our lawsuit, there was a gender-free nursery at Hancock International Airport in Syracuse, New York. Yes; we were boasting. This is part of what celebrating is all about. Karen herself did her share of well-deserved bragging. Over and over she kept saying, "We have overturned the world, and that was our intent." And what before had been stated in passing now became her slogan: "The world will change along with diapers."

Karen DeCrow, because of her national and international reputation, got most of the credit for winning our lawsuit. She got another kind of credit too. With a mixture of humor and gratitude she reported on something new in her life: She began getting letters from people who, on their travels, were sighting evidence that men's diaper-changing stations were cropping up in other countries. People were taking photos of these stations and sending them to her, sometimes in envelopes, sometimes as postcards. She received such photos from France, Brussels, several places

in South America, England, and a host of other places. All of them were coming in because now, at Hancock International Airport in Syracuse, New York, United States, there at last was a very conspicuous sign at a relatively small airport letting people know that, here for their use, were gender-neutral diaper-changing facilities.

I was glad, but mainly I was relieved. "The diaper-changing issue," as we called it, wasn't the only men's liberation battle I was fighting. In truth I probably did less celebrating than anyone involved in that lawsuit because I was already dealing with what would come next. In short, I was not one to rest on my laurels, and never had been inclined toward doing this. For example, I graduated from university three times: with a B.A. in 1970, an M.A. in 1972, and a Ph.D. in 1976. I did not attend any of these graduations. After attaining each degree my attitude was: Why waste a day going through a time-consuming ceremony just to be handed a diploma? They could mail it to me. I had other work to do.

BRINGING THE BIG COMPANIES IN LINE

Besides, I was not inclined toward celebrating when I knew full well that just because the lawsuit was won, this did not at all mean the struggle was over. In other words, to indulge the old maxim, the battle was won but the war was not over. There remained all those other buildings in the country. Their owners hadn't had their consciousness raised, so they were not going to go to the trouble of installing diaper-changing facilities for men unless they were forced to. We had won just one lawsuit. Were we now going to have to embark on a legal crusade that would involve thousands of lawsuits all over the country? The idea of doing that much work felt overwhelming. We didn't have the money, I didn't have the time, and the idea of trying to push this issue for the rest of my life actually caused me to feel a kind of despair. I had other things I wanted to do with my life besides fight through one diaper-changing lawsuit after another.

One night, within a week after our win, an idea came to me and for this idea I have to give credit to an attorney I knew named Greg Robinson. He not only was an attorney, he also was a preacher, and he possessed not a little charisma. Moreover he had a true genius for legal strategy.

He was brilliant, always evinced considerable erudition, but he claimed that his main talent as an attorney was knowing how to be devious. Over the years, having gone through many legal battles, I have come to believe he was absolutely right. Although he was not my attorney when I divorced my first wife, he was my attorney in some of the post-divorce legal squabbles. He also was my attorney with other legal problems, one which involved taking a case to the Missouri Supreme Court and winning. It seemed that I was always getting into, or at least moving up to the brink of, one legal fight after another. And very often he would advise, "First, threaten to sue." I would always counter with, "But I could never win that lawsuit." He would blandly reply, "But you can always threaten. In the legal world, a threat often has more clout than the actual lawsuit." It took his saying this many times before I finally was convinced. And then he gave me a real-life lesson as I observed a series of legal maneuvers he himself was in which had very effective repercussions against his adversary. First he threatened to sue and made this known to his community and to his adversary's community. Because Greg and I lived in the same community, I witnessed the

immediate and devastating social censure against his adversary that was caused by this mere threat. As soon as the effects of this threat began to diminish Greg went ahead and filed the lawsuit. I admonished him with my usual, "You'll never be able to win this." He merely smiled, "So what? I don't have to go ahead with the lawsuit. But now that his name is in all the newspapers, everybody's talking about what a scumbag he is, and I can wait years while he dreads the day the lawsuit actually does go to trial. Meanwhile he gets ulcers from worry and the rest of the community gossips about what a total low-life he is." That was exactly what happened. The lawsuit just sat there, and whenever people seemed to be thinking Greg had forgotten about it he would "rattle a few chains"—as he put it—making it look like he was ready to press the matter to court, and everybody would start talking again. The lawsuit sat there until it would either run out, or had to be filed again. Greg kept saying he would file it again, which of course made his opponent worry all the more and the community gossip all the more, but in the end he let it run out. Without ever having to spend any time or money, except for the modest filing fee at the beginning, he had

spent years getting revenge and wrecking his adversary's life. I had learned my lesson: Be devious. And as for the present matter, I did not want to file any lawsuit, but at least I—or we—could threaten to.

I got in touch with John Rossler. At first he was opposed to this strategy. John Rossler, always amiable and optimistic about human nature, wanted to do things his way—write letters to big executives, have lunch with them, tell them about what we had accomplished, and get them to voluntarily come over to our way of seeing things. I impressed upon him that there could never be time for this. Lunch with corporate heads in even fifty cities, given his other commitments to business and children, would take years. We needed to do something more comprehensive and do it quickly while enthusiasm about our win was still running high in the membership of Fathers' Rights Association of New York State. He agreed to talk to Karen DeCrow about all this.

She took the same point of view I did, and gave minimal legal advice. We would draw up a list of major corporations and send the top executives or their legal departments a letter which would spell out three things: It documented

our recent legal win and emphasized that now there was legal precedent on our side for another win. Second, if they did not put in diaper-changing stations, then we would sue, and with legal precedent on our side we would win. And third, since they had been warned in advance about this lawsuit, we would have no trouble winning not only the lawsuit but also legal fees and monetary legal damages. I thought it a shrewd and thorough letter, and wish I could present it here, but despite much searching and many queries to others I can not find a copy of it. Nor can I find a list of the corporations we sent it to.²⁶ This list included K-Mart, Wal-Mart, Target, J.C. Penny's, Montgomery Ward, Sears, grocery stores like Safeway and Kroger, and many other department store chains and grocery chains I had never even heard of. Also we sent the letter to some major manufacturers. What is amazing is that every one of them capitulated. All the secretarial work around sending out the letters had been done by the Fathers' Rights Association of New York State people in Syracuse, and the responses rolled in. Frankly I was stunned. The advice of long ago from my attorney, Greg Robinson, to "be devious and threaten" had worked.

Obviously this approach had worked because it was based on solid legal grounds. Those companies could foresee the consequences if they did not comply with the terms of our request. But did we really scare them that badly? Surely some of them had to realize that, as a group, we were small, poor, and overstretched with our time. John Rossler and I, along with other men who were involved, pondered why they had capitulated so readily. My theory finally seemed to be the one that held sway. These companies gave in not only because otherwise they might lose a lot of money, they also gave in because the alternative was so cheap. A diaper-changing station could be bought for about \$150 at the time. (In mid-2017 the cost of a diaper-changing station manufactured and marketed by Koala Kare, which now seems to be the most ubiquitous brand, sold for \$200. Since then—as this book goes to press—the price has nudged up to about \$220.) A hired handyman, or perhaps a maintenance man already working in the building, needs about one hour to put it in. Back then these companies could spend approximately \$200 putting in one diaper-changing table and they could claim they had complied with our demands. At today's prices, if \$100 is added for installing a diaper-

changing table, then for under \$350 a company has bought compliance with federal law. Plus it has made many fathers happy. All very cheap and simple. Less money than it would cost just to have a legal department review the issue, let alone fight it out.

John Rossler and Bruce Gerling did a lot of joking about how stupid they had been not to have designed a diaper-changing table especially for men, marketed it to a manufacturer, and then they could have made a great deal of money selling it to all these companies. But of course they were just joking. When that lawsuit was filed, almost no one believed we would win.

If there was no money to be made from diaper-changing tables, there nevertheless was a great deal of work to be done. The companies had given in to our demands, by letter. Would they actually do it?

Again, the membership at the Syracuse chapter of Fathers' Rights Association of New York State were the ones who did the work on this. All of us did at least some traveling, and when we traveled we checked the restroom facilities of these corporations, and if a diaper-changing station was not there for men to use we would voice a

complaint verbally and sometimes produce a copy of the original letter and reiterate our threat. Slowly they all put in the diaper-changing tables. Except Target. They had probably been the first to capitulate to our demands "on paper," but they were the last to actually install the facilities, and this happened only after a follow-up letter threatening imminent legal action. The threat worked and they complied. We were relieved, because we certainly didn't have the time and money to press another lawsuit.

Our big win allowed a new consciousness about men changing diapers, and men being more involved parents, to work its way into our society's mode of thinking. We even spotted a goodly number of diaper-changing stations in businesses which had not been on the list we had sent those threatening letters to. But there obviously was a current of opposition and inaction flowing the other way. We would go to a new store that had been put up a year ago by one of the chains that had capitulated to us initially, and that new store would not have a diaper-changing station for men. Or we might go in to one of the stores which initially had had a diaper-changing table, and the table would be gone. There might even be holes in the wall where it had been

anchored before. Had a vandal torn it loose? Had an angry store manager defied us by having it removed? Had it merely broken off and not been replaced?

We didn't know, and we didn't have the time to pursue these many omissions. I was remarried, I had a young son, I lived in a new locale, and I was trying to get my career on a different track. Plus I now was editing Transitions, the publication of the National Coalition of Free Men, which involved about 20 hours of unpaid, volunteer work per week. All of us—MRA's and FRA's—had "too much on our plates" already.

But if there were times we lost ground we also gained. In fact I would estimate that within 20 years after that lawsuit was won in 1988, there were at least 100 new diaper-changing stations for every one that disappeared. And most of these were in businesses which were installing them voluntarily. I suspect business owners were motivated to do this partly because they saw those stations elsewhere and simply thought it was the right thing to do. Others were probably motivated by customer complaints (I knew of some of these cases), and others likely came about because the business owners themselves were fathers.

ON-GOING AND CURRENT ACTIVISM:

STILL WORKING TO ENFORCE OUR WIN

Still, there remained glaring deficits which meant that eventually legal action would result. For example, as recently as February of 2012 a major dispute broke out in Miami, Florida with sponsors pressing for a statute requiring the installation of diaper-changing stations in men's restrooms throughout the city. As had happened back in 1985 with our case, the opponents cited concerns about fathers being child molesters, and this time the police union sided (on what sociological grounds?!) with these opponents. But a one-hour meeting between the proponents of the measure and the police union president resulted in approval of the measure, whereupon Miami spent \$45,000 to install diaper-changing stations in men's restrooms throughout the city. This installation was mandated by a vote of city commissioners, and the original legal precedent of our Syracuse win back in 1988 was cited. So in this case new gains were made, and an old victory was precisely what supported this new victory.²⁷

Another gain has come from a power as high as the President of the United States. It started with a bill introduced in the House of Representatives by Representative David Cicilline. This bill was quickly passed in Congress by a wide bipartisan majority, and on October 7, 2016 it was signed into law by President Obama. Called the BABIES Act, which is an acronym for Bathrooms Accessible in Every Situation Act, this law requires both men's and women's restrooms in publicly accessible federal buildings to have diaper-changing stations. An immediate, and huge, bonus of this act was the fact that two major corporations, Costco and Walmart, immediately put in changing stations in both men's and women's restrooms. For Costco this was a new move. For Walmart it was a remedial move because they had been one of the original corporations which had been forced to do this because of the lawsuit we had finalized back in 1988. They however had become lax in following the stipulations of the letter we had sent out. But I nevertheless applaud them for (again) catching up with the times. Frankly I feel less enthusiasm about the federal buildings which the BABIES Act applies to. There are too many glaring loopholes. The law mandates that such

construction happen in the next two years. Two years is a long time for the installation of something as simple as a changing station that mounts on the wall, folds down, and then after use is folded back up against the wall and takes up very little space. But what is alarming is the fact that this stipulation applies to federal buildings only. It does not apply to state, county, or city buildings. Moreover, it explicitly states that exceptions are allowed where the cost of construction is unfeasible. What does "unfeasible" mean here? How can the modest cost of installing a diaper-changing station be construed as unfeasible?! Moreover, the construction of this diaper-changing station for men can be delayed indefinitely if there is other construction going on anywhere in that federal building. In a large federal building, there likely is construction of some kind going on somewhere in that building all the time. Also exceptions are allowed if there is a restroom with a changing table elsewhere on the same floor with signage indicating its location. I suspect that this law will have more effect on encouraging private corporations to put in diaper-changing stations than it will have on getting such stations actually installed in federal buildings. But I will

gratefully take everything we can get. (Then promptly, and righteously, ask for more.)

Over the last decade there has been a platitude in vogue here in the United States which goes, "If it's going to happen in this country it will happen in California first." The potty-parity issue has not reflected this maxim. What first happened was on the other coast, in New York. It has now happened on the national level in Washington D.C. but California has dragged its feet. **In 2014 the ultra-liberal governor Jerry Brown struck down two bills in California that would have made diaper-changing facilities more accessible to men.** One of these bills would have mandated that diaper-changing tables for men be installed in movie-theatres and shopping malls. Governor Brown advanced the tepid (and scarcely executive) attitude that while he supported the idea in general, he preferred to leave such matters for private businesses to figure out. This bill went back on the legislative docket and began a slow process of moving its way through the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Still trying to catch up with the new mentality about changing tables, in fall of 2017 Jerry Brown did sign into law a requirement that new (sic) state

buildings being constructed must include at least one changing table in women's and men's restrooms. Also, newly-constructed public buildings such as sports arenas, theatres, and libraries must include a diaper-changing station accessible to both men and women (i.e., it can be a gender-free nursery and not necessarily merely a fold-down changing table in the restrooms). I am glad to know Jerry Brown is at last getting his consciousness raised. But I remain, if not a curmudgeon, then a cautious scrutinizer. These are new buildings. What about old buildings? The legal precedent which Fathers' Rights Association of New York State set back in 1988 made it clear that diaper-changing facilities for men be installed in all existing men's restrooms, not just in men's restrooms that are newly constructed. I am glad for what Jerry Brown has done in California. However I am not impressed. He could have done more. He could have ordered installation of those small, modestly-priced, unobtrusive, and very needed changing tables in all men's restrooms—including restrooms that already exist. After all, the legal precedent set back in 1988 mandates that he should have done so. Since when is the governor of a state not subject to the mandates of

legal precedent established by the judiciary branch of our federal government? But it's not as though New York State itself has paid a great deal of attention to judiciary Federal mandates that, back in the year 1988, were established within its own borders. A New York bill that would have included the very same measures that California's Governor Jerry Brown struck down in 2014, and then helped put into law in 2017, came to the fore in the New York State assembly in 2015, but as of this writing (in May of 2018) that bill is still languishing in committee.

A review of the reluctant consciousness-raising about potty parity that is going on in Florida, in the Federal Government, and in California, and now is garishly stalled in New York State does not give me a warm, grateful feeling. Quite the contrary, I consider these actions tardy and dismal compared to what I and other men have a legal right to expect. Equal rights for fathers on this issue was mandated by adjudication in the United States District Court: Northern District of New York. That is a federal court, and this mandate happened 30 years ago in 1988. So my expectation is, quite justifiably, that the executive branch of government at the federal level, and in every

state, county, and city, should do what they are supposed to do. Namely: Implement the existing mandates of the courts! Then diaper-changing stations for fathers would be in place where they are supposed to be—in every public restroom in the country:

A REMINDER:

OUR VICTORY IS LEGAL PRECEDENT

There is no need for these new, exploratory, reluctant, legislative machinations which waste lawmakers' time and eventually result in vague laws that have no teeth in them. The travesty is that at present any governor, even our national President, chooses to enforce these recently-fabricated, cowardly, and sanitized laws on the basis of their whim rather than because it is their duty. They should look to that here-promulgated judicial event of 1985 through 1988 called Federal Case number: 85-cv-972. Enforce that federal court decision and let the legislatures of both the federal and state government turn their attention to other things. They don't need to reinvent the wheel. All they need to do is use the one the men's liberation movement gave them a long time ago, and while they are at it, remind the executive branch that their duty is to implement and enforce that 1988 decision immediately, perpetually, and everywhere.

Maybe the dawdling powers-that-should-be will finally get the hint, given that more and more public pressure on this issue is coming to the fore. A good example of such pressure involves a social media campaign on behalf of diaper-changing stations for fathers which began in 2015. Frustrated by the lack of changing facilities in men's restrooms when he was caring for his baby daughter, the well-known movie actor Ashton Kutcher did a posting of the situation on Facebook and it "went viral." Within two hours he had 50,000 signatures supporting his concern. Within another few weeks he had collected an additional 50,000 signatures. That is 100,000 signatures. The result was that several state legislatures introduced or passed laws requiring changing stations in men's restrooms. And Target (which had grown lax with their changing stations for men since our lawsuit had forced them to begin this process back in the late 1980s), already receiving many complaints from dads on this issue, began responding (again), i.e., installing changing stations for men to use. Similarly, in early 2017 a frustrated father wrote the CEO of Macy's department store regarding their lack of changing stations for fathers, and the company immediately put a team

together to start the process of installing changing stations for men to use. The previous year, the restaurant chain Ruby Tuesday went to work immediately installing changing tables for men after Scotty Schrier (writer for The Guardian) took his complaints to the media and received televised coverage.

Also, news comes in via the Internet regarding a relatively recent case of potty parity discrimination and also a welcome remedy. Namely, on January 1, 2019, a television newscast on ABC 13 reports:

"New York fathers will now have changing tables in men's public restrooms.

The new law that goes into effect in 2019 changes the state's building code to require new and renovated buildings with public bathrooms to provide changing tables in both the women's and men's restroom.

The move comes after a photo of a dad changing his child's diaper on the floor of a restroom went viral."

This of course is welcome news, but because I am jaded by now, I am not impressed by what I espy as glaring deficiencies in this report: Why only new and renovated buildings instead of all buildings? Why only public bathrooms? And why did it take New York City so long to get around to this after that Federal Court ruling way back in 1988 which this book is about? Also I have a private

grouch: Only one photo of a man changing a diaper on the floor of a restroom brings all this about? What about the hundreds of times I did this difficult task on the floor of a restroom, or on the counter in a restroom, on a floor in restaurants, even on floors in hallways of public buildings? But this photo got put on the Internet. So instead of being grouchy, I suppose I should celebrate the power of modern social media

It bears noting that I list this example, putting it in the manuscript for this book after I had thought the manuscript was finished, because Tom Williamson, my cohort of yore in that 1985 lawsuit, sent it to me with enthusiastic intent. However, the point has now been sufficiently made in what I have written: Namely, this kind of news wouldn't even have to hit social media, or be broadcast on television, were our current government executives paying attention to what our existing laws already are and, more importantly, taking the time and trouble to enforce those laws. So while I present this one further case as a point of current interest, I shall report no more. This book is a history, an exhortation regarding the future, and is set forth as a template to help others

pursue legal redress regarding inequities in diaper-changing facilities they come up against. This book can not hope to record every detail of the present or the anticipated events of the near future. However, this New York instance well illustrates how the cycle of dealing with the potty parity issue continues to go on and on. That 1988 ruling, and the public's endorsement of the sentiment behind that ruling, has had the effect of bringing about only partial compliance with the law. There remain other glaring omissions, they go unnoticed or unaddressed for too long, but then eventually someone becomes a squeaky wheel, whether it be a men's liberation group, a celebrity actor, or social media, and then the courts and legislatures get busy until companies begin, or once again begin, complying with demands for change. A few more diaper-changing stations for men get installed, and slowly—too slowly and too haltingly—momentum continues to build. And the faster it builds the more it builds.

What a compliant and eager CEO does one year, in three years has become an assumed way of doing things. Such compliance evokes endorsement by others, and activists demanding change achieve a further degree of endorsement by

other activists. A father who, five years ago might have written a letter to a company stating, "I have been most inconvenienced ... ," this year writes a letter that says, "I am angered by the fact that your company, unlike other companies I shall patronize henceforth, has not installed ... ," and then ends his letter with a reference to a judicial decision or to the state's law on this matter.

A self-righteous attitude is infectious. It causes company executives to pay attention. And it invites companionship with other men who have been inconvenienced in the same way. Here in the Saint Louis area where I live, I note the upsurge of new men's liberation groups, most with a fathers' rights orientation. Over in the Saint Louis County area of Affton, an activist named Mark Ludwig has founded a fathers' rights group called Americans for Equal Shared Parenting which focuses on divorce and custody issues, but displays a keen interest in the diaper-changing issue. Also, in the Saint Louis township of Kirkwood, Kirk Augustine of STL Dads Group is angry about the lack of diaper-changing facilities for men, has spoken trenchantly to the media about this anger, and is doing what he can to remedy the situation. Back in 1985 I was living in Missouri

but pressing a cause with activists and an attorney who lived far away in New York State. Now I have neighbors helping with this cause.

We men are letting people know that when we are trying to be good dads, and also good husbands, by discharging our share of the child-caring duties, then the lack of diaper-changing facilities makes us feel like we are being punished just for being dads. Punished when all we are trying to do is the small, unpleasant, but necessary task of changing a dirty diaper. And we feel especially insulted when, not 20 feet away in an adjoining women's restroom, there are ample facilities for this task.

A squirming infant, or a screaming toddler, who has a dirty diaper is a problem. When a real man confronts a problem he goes directly to the solution. Being deprived of a necessary tool—a changing table—for accomplishing this solution is ridiculous, illegal, and intolerable. Also it causes the full burden for taking care of this unpleasant task to fall on the mother. That is unfair, and despite the protests of all those women back in the mid-1980s, who were opposed to the idea of men taking on this role because they were worried that it would encroach upon their identities

as mothers, we now see women welcoming the fact that when fathers are out in public, or in the home, they take on their share of this primal responsibility. Women supporting us in our role as parents helps us feel more like fathers instead of as spectators standing on the sidelines.

Obviously we have at last reached a point where the diaper-changing issue is more than ideological; it is something men across our entire society have strong emotions about. And strong emotions clamor for expression. The result for me is that, whereas a third of a century ago I was approaching this issue as a political activist and as a legal strategist, now I am more personally confrontational. For example, not long ago I politely approached the owner of a small restaurant about the lack of a diaper-changing station in the men's restroom after confirming that there was one in the more spacious women's restroom. The owner informed me that there couldn't be one in both rooms because there wasn't enough space. In a firm tone that was, I hope, thoroughly insistent, I informed him that I have seen diaper-changing stations in the tiny restrooms of jet-liners, so there was plenty of room for one in his restroom, especially since when those tables are

not being used they are folded up against the wall. He was not convinced and tried to brush me off. I informed him that if I came to his restaurant again, and there wasn't a diaper-changing station in place, it would be the last time I would come as a customer. This didn't seem to bother him either. I then informed him that my next course of action would be to file a lawsuit in court against him. That got his attention. (I wouldn't actually have wanted to do this since I scarcely have the time; but I learned a long time ago that threats do count.) I also told him I would file a complaint about this on social media. Which I would definitely do. This got his attention even more than the threat of a lawsuit. I haven't been back to that restaurant, but if I do go back and a diaper-changing table isn't there, he will feel the effects of an indignant protest before I leave. Then he can read about it in the social media commentary on area restaurants. These opinions, in today's society, have clout. Restaurant owners know this.

The truth is, I would like to have something more significant than mere diaper-changing stations in public places for men. I would prefer that there be more of what

some people call "family rooms," "parent rooms," or simply "nurseries." These already exist at some places here in the United States, and I have read about them in places as far afield as Belgium, Argentina, Australia, even Iceland. These nurseries are for both moms and dads. Well lighted, and well provisioned, they are clean, relaxing, and they have changing tables as well as places for cleaning one's child (when the diaper elimination has produced a real mess). There are private stalls for breast-feeding mothers, microwave ovens for heating milk or baby food, plush chairs in which a tired parent can rest or spend time comforting an upset child, and the general atmosphere is accommodating and even welcoming. Men and women mingle as they go about their business, and the stereotypes of mom as the preferred parent and dad as the auxiliary parent simply melt away. People are doing the normal, natural, practical necessities of parenting a small child.

In early 2018, on a National Public Radio news spot, I learned that several studies now show that men are doing an equal share of child care. Obviously men have come a long way, both in their willingness to do child care, and also in being accepted by society as equal parents. (The report

went on to claim that men are not yet doing their equal share of the housework, but I do not think this warrants being accepted as a valid criticism of men. Rather, I believe it reflects the way certain roles in the household—separate from parenting—are still being played out in more traditional ways. I think it only natural that men would not yet be doing half the housework given that they are still busy playing traditional male roles around the household roles which mom herself is not yet willing to take on. Mom is washing the dishes; dad is outside mowing the lawn. Mom is scrubbing the floor; dad is changing the sparkplugs in the car. Mom is vacuuming the floors; dad is under the kitchen sink trying to fix a leak and thus save the household an expensive repair bill. In other words, the lack of parity in housework responsibilities does not warrant criticism toward men. Men are playing the "Mister Fix-It" role while women are doing the roles of cooking and cleaning. When people are ready to start changing these roles, i.e., when mom is ready to change the oil on the car just as willingly as dad is inclined to do the laundry, then if there is inequity as to who does the most work around the house, at that point we can start addressing

this issue too. Meanwhile, my focus is on trying to attain equality, for men, with access to diaper-changing facilities.

Moreover I am not surprised that men are now doing half the child care in the home. For men, child care isn't just a chore, it is a glad opportunity. Of course it isn't all pleasant. But what in life is? Men seldom feel eager to change a diaper. They just do it. Which means that diaper-changing facilities now are all the more important for men.

GIVING CREDIT:

AN EXERCISE IN GRATITUDE

At this point in my life, it is only fair that even when I see that potty parity is not yet a reality, I nevertheless acknowledge that the gains have been significant. This allows me to relax my sense of vigilant activism and simply be glad for what has been achieved. Also, I indulge in an excursion down memory lane, as has been the case in writing this book. This writing has been a chore—all those facts, keeping track of the activist work by so many different men and precisely when they did it,

plus remembering the difficulties of my early years caring for my daughter when there were zero diaper-changing facilities for me to use in public.

But along with being a chore, this writing has allowed a great deal of pleasant pondering. I am pleased to know that, even though I am about to turn 70 years of age, it certainly seems that I am not yet succumbing to a diminishment of mental faculties. My memory must be sharp given that, with the aid of notes of yore and old journal articles, I am able to so vividly remember the particulars of that diaper-changing lawsuit of long ago. Yes; the words "long ago" are appropriate. It was over four decades ago that I not only was on the road but also was in the air with my two-year-old daughter, both exhausting myself and enjoying myself. It was a third of a century ago when we filed that lawsuit pressing for diaper-changing facilities for men. As I ponder those many years of personal history that was also activist history, I now am able to feel a great deal of gratitude. I can never thank John Rossler enough for his ability to maintain an attitude of indefatigable activism while also being a paragon of integrity. And while playing these roles he was a very busy

parent himself, even as he maintained his exemplary admixture of levity, jocular amiability, and considerable charisma. He worked tirelessly, his personality drew support from other men, and also helped arouse the personal interest and generous support of Karen DeCrow. He was our main proponent in those early years of diaper-changing activism. His unquenchable optimism sometimes puzzled us, but at the same time it inspired us, and his moral stature instilled trust in everyone. Obviously people disagreed with him—some so vehemently that his early organization, Equal Rights for Fathers, was fractured and then disappeared. But the dissent was over ideas, not over John Rossler's personality. I said it way back then, and am honored to here repeat it: If anyone disliked John Rossler, it was only because they were irritated by the fact that they couldn't find any good reason for disliking him.

John Rossler was the activist, and I was the idea man. I suppose it would be accurate to say that in this role I was the number-two man for this particular fathers' rights fracas. I was, I am sure, the first person associated with that lawsuit to have realized the inequity, to have experienced it not merely as an idea but in my daily tasks

as a parent, and to have begun pondering way back then—as early as 1977—the possibility of one day doing something about this inequity through the men’s liberation movement. So it is no wonder that when this issue came to the fore in discussion with several men in the men’s movement, especially with John Rossler, I was already inclined toward a very activist stance and hence was the one who wanted to pursue a legal direction and sue. But it took John Rossler’s personality to find us the best attorney for taking our lawsuit. And I would never have thought of suing the airport at Syracuse. To me Syracuse was just a small town. But both John Rossler and Karen DeCrow, because they lived in Syracuse, knew that its airport was not considered a small airport, and even if it had been, the lawsuit would still be directed at all levels of government: city, county, state, and federal. Because of my considerable experience in litigation (occasioned by the workings of my dad’s business and my own) I was able to give cogent advice and direction to both John Rossler and Karen DeCrow at crucial stages during the lawsuit itself. And after we won the lawsuit, it was my strategy—which worked—that caused us to draw up a list of corporations to threaten with a

lawsuit—a strategy which proved immensely successful. (How I wish I could find that original list of corporations and the original letter we wrote them, but I can not find these and no one else seems to have them either. Of course, I have lost touch with most of those other people, or at this stage in their lives they either have forgotten many of the details or are not much interested in it anymore. After all, I was almost the youngest man associated with that lawsuit.) Do I feel gratitude toward myself? Yes. I am grateful (in what some might think is an odd way) for having been born with a great deal of both willpower and energy. Not many fathers could have combined career and parenting like I did. That took sheer strength of body and much emotional fortitude. Because of these traits, I was able to be "on the road" with my daughter, who at that age enjoyed our travels immensely. Possessing a high level of energy and a stubborn will, I was of sensitive temperament, so unlike what might have been the response of many men, I found the lack of diaper-changing facilities depressing, insulting, and angering. These emotions made me identify this situation as more than a situation—it was a problem

that required a solution, an injustice that needed to be remedied.

So I suppose I am grateful for who I was, and am—a man of strong will, strong feelings, and strong convictions. I was not going to stand still and let society run roughshod over fathers when fathers were trying to do more than be a parent. They were trying to parent.

I also am grateful to myself that I had already attained both experience and acumen when it came to legal strategy. My father's vast business (the biggest horse operation in the world) meant there were always legal matters afoot, whether this involved a lawsuit by a neighboring farmer, getting horses through inspection at an airport, or dealing with import regulations when animals were shipped to foreign countries. I myself had been embroiled in legal battles in academia, in state politics, and not least, in my own divorce and custody battles which culminated in my becoming the first custodial divorced father in Missouri. And during all these battles, I not only pushed toward a victory, I also was unceasingly alert to the peregrinations and subtleties of legal strategy. I paid attention to what moved me in the direction of a

victory, what my lawyers' strengths were, what their weaknesses were, and how their insights might apply to my own legal dealings in the future. Also, I am grateful that I possess a unique and finely-honed ability which involves knowing precisely when to step back from a fray and let someone else take over. Or exactly when to not let someone else keep pushing and instead take over the job myself. I have wondered if this ability comes from my experience in boxing (amateur) and karate (5th-degree black belt in Okinawan karate earned back in 1968 when a black belt meant something). This ability involves sensing the precise moment when to make a move—whether this involves getting to my feet in a public meeting and taking the floor, or knowing the precise second when an adversary shows weakness in an argument and then immediately taking advantage of that weakness. In phone calls during this diaper-changing lawsuit, some of the directions people wanted to pursue were erratic and destructive. I knew how to deflect and even defuse these undirected, or misdirected, forays by knowing exactly when to argue, when to be silent, and when to cajole, and also when to transfer a job from one person to another. This entailed being able to espy what the exact

abilities of another person were, and re-direct that person toward a path which would allow them to use their abilities most effectively.

John Rossler's role was public and generous. My role was low-key and strategic. I was stubborn like my father—perceptive like the horseman he was. Also I was strategic and cunning as a lawyer is. Part of this strategic, and cunning, perceptivity allowed me to have the ability to recognize that John Rossler and I needed to be very alert to gathering more allies as we proceeded toward a legal battle.

As I earlier mentioned briefly, when Karen told us she would have to be paid, John was at a loss as to how to come up with the funds. He and I had almost depleted our own funds with our divorce and custody battles, and also with our other men's liberation work. We would have to get the money to pay for this lawsuit from other people. This could best be done by arranging matters so that donations would be more generous if they could be used as a tax write-off. So Fathers' Rights Association of New York State needed to have a 501(c)(3) status as a tax-exempt charity, but it lacked this status. However, the Coalition of Free Men did

have this status. I suggested to John Rossler that he call Tom Williamson, president of CFM, and arrange matters so that donations could be made to CFM. This way disbursements to Karen DeCrow could be made from the CFM treasury until John Rossler's group could get tax-exempt status (a longer process in those days than it is now; back then this process could easily take a year). John wanted me to phone Tom and convince him that this would be a worthy and feasible alliance. I demurred, knowing that Tom would be pleased to hear from someone with the reputation of John Rossler. Tom indeed was pleased, readily offered the Coalition of Free Men's services, and then went on to become the third-most-important man in this lawsuit. Was I being manipulative? I don't think so. I was being perceptive. I knew Tom Williamson would enjoy this role and would do it well. Tom was a politician. He was good at organizing and leading. I wasn't good at either of these things, so Tom's help in this regard was indispensable. He set to work applying the number-one rule of the politician: "Always make yourself look bigger than you are." He worked at making our issue become much more of a priority to all the other MRA's and FRA's. In this way we obtained their

respect and support. We got attention from the media, and monetary contributions came in from MRA's and FRA's all over the country. Tom, like any good politician, wasn't just doing the book-keeping for his organization (CFM), he was being the cheerleader who drummed up support, turned that support into enthusiasm, and channeled that enthusiasm into monetary involvement. People who already thought of themselves as participants in the potty parity issue became ardent activists.

John Rossler was clearly the primary man in this lawsuit. He was the main and most effective activist—the man who led us all and whose personality won over supporters, the press, and even many people in society who could never have been won over by either myself or by Tom Williamson. Our personalities were too adamant. Our self-righteous anger, however polite, was never very well concealed. John however could gain support with an easy-going attitude that was invitational and exuded good will. He lacked the legal acumen and the sense of timing I possessed, but he did have the political connections and bargaining abilities Tom had. Our different abilities made us a good team. John was first, I was second, Tom was

third. But we all were indispensable in our own way.

Without John, Tom and I were ineffectual. Without me, John lacked direction and decisiveness. Without Tom's work, John and I were like boats dead in the water because we had no fuel. As a triad (or "trinity" as I joked to John) **we were on our way to changing the world.**

In this ranking of who was most crucial in the potty parity lawsuit back in 1985, even though the most important three were John Rossler, myself, and Tom Williamson, the roster nevertheless goes on. Karen DeCrow, our attorney, is next in line. I called her "Our Saint in Shining Armor" for many reasons. Despite the fact that her primary sympathies were with women's issues, she was more than willing to take on our case—on behalf of women, yes, but also on behalf of men. When she informed us that she would have to charge us for her work, she made sure to keep the fees minimal. She did not procrastinate, which most attorneys are experts at doing. She moved quickly, negotiated strongly, and knew how to align the media on her side. Her combination of sympathy and enthusiasm made her refreshingly easy to work with and caused us to move quickly toward a victory. The speed at which the negotiations happened, and the impending taste of

victory, were very much appreciated by those of us who were foremost in this crusade. We knew that retaining the enthusiasm of the membership in our organizations was crucial, whereas a protracted legal battle would be discouraging—people would start turning their attentions elsewhere. In short, Karen was willing to do a job few attorneys—much less a female attorney—would have been willing to do and she did it well, speedily, and led us to victory. For this our saint in shining armor, in my opinion, deserves to be canonized.

The Syracuse chapter of Fathers' Rights Association of New York State is next in line for laurels. These men, as a group, provided a solid foundation for our lawsuit. We were not merely a few men dealing with an idea; that chapter let it be known that we were a group of men demanding to be heard. They supported Rossler, communicated well with other men's rights groups across the nation, and their president—Bruce Gerling—ran the entire organization like clockwork. In Bruce's work there were no oversights, no mistakes, not a trace of mediocrity. Bruce was not compulsive; he was merely a perfectionist. The chapter he headed was not only well coordinated, the members also were cheerful and

enthusiastic. Together they provided the foundation that supported those of us who were the overworked leaders. We could not have done what we accomplished without their moral support, their passion, and the goodwill of their friendship.

But the most important people, one might say, were the babies—the little ones whose diapers needed changing. Also their fathers who were trying to fill this role. I am referring to the babies and the fathers in the Syracuse area. At the time I humorously referred to these fathers as the founding fathers and to the babies as the foundlings. Foundlings, because their right to their fathers' parenting had been slighted by our society, and we were trying to give these neglected little ones the care they needed and deserved.

There were many times someone in the press, interviewing me, would ask, "Who are the main players in your lawsuit?"

I would answer, "In this order: John Rossler, myself, Tom Williamson, Karen DeCrow, Bruce Gerling, the Syracuse chapter, plus all those little children in diapers. Or

maybe the diaper brigade is actually the most important because they are the ones who motivated the rest of us."

It was all those babies who kept the men from being macho. Neither the leaders nor the members of the chapters were in competition with each other. No one was trying to be the alpha male, and no one was vying for the most credit. We were going about this lawsuit like a person goes about changing a diaper. It's a messy task, so let's just get on with it and get the job done. I would guess that the potty parity lawsuit of 1985 was probably the most cooperative, congenial, and noncompetitive action ever taken by a men's rights or a fathers' rights group. I am glad we could make it all happen in a way that culminated in a virtual consensus of feeling even amidst such passion and tension. (It warrants being stated here that back then nobody even used the phrase "potty parity." We just called it "the diaper-changing issue.")

Now, as I write this in the year 2018, I think back on those many times I rushed through an airport with my little daughter and wonder how I had the energy to do so much parenting and have a career too. I suppose it helps that when my travels, as a single dad with my daughter, began in

late 1977 I was only 29 years old. Later, when the lawsuit was filed in 1985, I was 37 years old (though one of the youngest men of those who were active in that lawsuit). I still had a great deal of energy then. But I have much less energy now. I am, as I tell my grandkids, "an ugly old grandpaw." I suppose, really, I am not so terribly old or I wouldn't have had the energy to write this history of how the potty parity issue had its beginnings. And maybe I am not so very ugly because, if I were, I probably wouldn't be able to joke about it.

I do sometimes shake my head when I reflect upon how much of my time and money went into dealing with men's liberation issues. For about 20 years I put in at least 20 hours of volunteer work a week participating in activist meetings, giving support in the courtroom to fathers who were fighting for custody and a fair divorce settlement, holding formal and informal one-on-one meetings, giving speeches, appearing on radio and TV, plus spending all those hours at my desk writing letters, editing men's publications, writing for men's publications, and all those many phone consults. For about 20 years my phone bills, on behalf of men's liberation issues, averaged over \$200 a

month. This was back in the days when long-distance calls were very expensive. If I were handed a check today reimbursing me for all those phone bills, plus paying me for all the time I put in on men's liberation work—even if this reimbursement for my time were only at the minimum-wage rate, I would be a very wealthy man.

A NEW EXPERIENCE:

AT LONG LAST, BEING THANKED BY THE PUBLIC

But because of what I did I have accumulated a different kind of wealth, and I am surprised by the fact that the older I get, even more of this wealth comes in. I receive the gift of other people's gratitude. It certainly doesn't happen often, but probably once every two months, when I speak to someone about the work I did in previous years with the men's liberation movement, people actually thank me for having changed society in a way that allows men to function better as human beings. I even get thanked for the diaper-changing stations when people learn that I was instrumental in getting them put in men's restrooms. And it isn't just men who thank me. As many women, as men,

have thanked me for the fact that now there are changing stations in men's restrooms. Back at the beginning, when women felt their hegemony over child-rearing was being threatened, they were scarcely inhibited about expressing their anger toward me. Now they realize that a man changing a diaper isn't taking away women's role-identity or their power. He is sharing a job, and women can be relieved that now it is shared instead of being all theirs.

But as much as I appreciate people thanking me, there is a way I appreciate it even more when I walk into a men's restroom, see a man changing a diaper, and realize that he isn't grateful—he simply takes it for granted that the changing station is there. I want this more than I want to be thanked. I want men to look upon a diaper-changing station not as a privilege, not as a lucky convenience, but as an integral part of their lives as parents which they have a right to take for granted.

OLD DRAMAS, UNSETTLED MEMORIES, AND

WELCOMING A NEW SOCIETY

I should here acknowledge that I felt reluctant about writing this book—this little history. I was reluctant, not out of laziness, but simply because after almost half a century of men's liberation work, it has been difficult for me to look back upon the diaper-changing issue as one of my foremost accomplishments. After all, there isn't any overt drama in a battle for diaper-changing stations. But there certainly was drama in other battles I fought. For example, I was willing to be arrested and go to jail when on a men's liberation radio show I hosted for about two years I was going to present a two-hour show on social and health issues regarding the penis. Despite orders from the imperious station manager, I refused to give a disclaimer that would warn the audience that the content could be considered obscene by some people. (After all, he himself had aired a half-hour broadcast on a feminist show about vaginal yeast infections without a word of disclaimer, and this show aired from noon to 12:30 P.M. which is when many people are having lunch.) I certainly spilled much rhetoric about how hearing a show on vaginal yeast infections, while eating lunch, could scarcely compare to a night-time show on the penis! For this I got attention from other radio

stations all across the nation, was written up in Playboy, and attorneys were eager to take my case for free if I did get arrested. That was big drama, and when I did the show and there were no repercussions, I almost felt let down. Then there was the drama of men's rights lawsuits demanding equal life insurance premiums for men, which itself was small compared to the courtroom drama over visitation and custody battles. In those battles, the attorneys fought it out with loud voices, cruel contempt, and high-sounding rhetoric. The judge might take the case seriously, but just as often mocked and smirked at the man. We sympathized with the man, felt euphoric when he won—even if it was only a small win (e.g., one day of visitation a week), and even though we hated putting in the time, the grand scenario of the battle stirred us—all that drama, all the money at stake, the loud voices, the occasional sobbing, the threats and ugly name-calling, someone occasionally being removed from the courtroom by the bailiff—all that, in my memory, seemed to stand out as much bigger and more important than winning a battle over something as small as a bunch of diaper-changing stations in men's restrooms.

Only as I began looking back over old publications, and old notes, did I start to understand how important that battle had been. I realized that sometimes the big dramas that seemed so important at the time really weren't so very big, and the low-key dramas often had huge importance and impact. Stated in a different way, one can indulge the cliché: "It's the small things that count." Changing a diaper involves bonding with a tiny child. Bonding happens because we are caring for the child—all the while being aware of its helplessness, how dependent upon us it is, how alive this little person is, how mortal, how much a part of our flesh and blood this busy, squirming little person is. This awareness comes to us very powerfully, not when we and our attorneys are waging a courtroom battle, but when we are doing something mundane like changing a diaper. Changing a diaper makes us aware that we are fathers, dads, parents, husbands, even grandfathers, all of us doing a task that invites us to fully realize the spiritual implications of a precious and shared identity between the two people we are: parent and child.

Still, I must admit that as glad and grateful as I am for what I accomplished in that diaper-changing lawsuit, I

still harbor an old resentment which has not entirely been laid to rest. What I resent is the overt mentality, the laws, and also the many subtle messages which made of me, as a parent, the one who was considered the secondary parent. And I resent the fact that the laws which protected women as parents overlooked me as a parent. I resent how all those omissions by society, and so many of the members of that society whom I knew personally, made it necessary for me to spend so many hours fighting for men's liberation and fathers' rights. I wish the fruits of all that I now have accomplished could have been available to me when I was a young father. I would have had more free time for myself, and more time for playing with my daughter instead of apologizing to her that I couldn't play more because I was working on a book that would help other fathers play with their children. If society had not been prejudiced against me in all those ways, I would have had time for more of my creative writing, which was what I loved most as an avocation and as a vocation. I would have had more time to indulge my passion for listening to classical music, or socializing with friends, and for what I was most deprived of—time for simply relaxing and doing nothing.

But I am grateful for the changes we succeeded in bringing about on behalf of fathers. If I sometimes resent that these changes did not come about earlier, I accept the fact that because I realized the necessity of making changes in our society, I had the insight, courage, and stamina to go ahead and choose the task of instrumenting these necessary changes.

By temperament I am never satisfied. I want more such changes. Only in the last two decades have men commonly attended parent-teacher conferences for their children. Before it was the exception; usually mom did it by herself. I want to see full participation by men in this task. I also want to see programs which put more men in the classroom—kindergarten, grade school, high schools. Especially in early kindergarten. My son, now 27 years old, was fortunate enough to have a male kindergarten teacher and I know this was a wonderful experience which made a lasting impression on him. I could tell, as he got older, that his experience with this early teacher caused him to more easily make male friends, be more comfortable with adult men, and be less affected by, and even more assertive toward, imperious female teachers. And he felt better about

his identity as a young scholar while not for a moment allowing other people to stigmatize him as an "egghead."

I believe that this self-confidence my son gained from early exposure to a man who was a good male role model, and who occupied a position involving both authority and nurturing, is the kind of thing that could help other young men in the future. Already I see programs in black ghettos, especially in New York, which are run by older black men for the sake of getting younger black men involved as parents. These older men are working hard, usually as volunteers, without pay. The young men are eager to learn, partly because they want to be good parents, and partly because they themselves feel uplifted and nurtured by this exposure to the wisdom of older men.

These programs have already proliferated despite very little public recognition, much less, public accolades. These older black men are proceeding with their work in the same way most of the work in the men's liberation movement has proceeded. They follow the same tried and true equation of the real man: Problem—solution. How very unlike the feminists who have used a great deal of rhetoric, not a few lies, and have been aided by the chivalry of men (most

notably by the gay faction of the feminist men's movement). Men's liberationists are not tempted to tell lies. (What is there to lie about?) They indulge in very little rhetoric. (Who would listen without branding them as complainers?) And men's liberationists haven't been aided by women except occasionally by wives, grandmothers, and a handful of women who happen to be unusually fair-minded. These black men, in their programs, are proceeding very like those of us in the diaper-changing lawsuit proceeded. We doggedly went to work. We kept working even when we felt we would get nowhere. (And if I may put this in a high-minded way, perhaps we kept working because we embodied the three cardinal virtues: faith, hope, and charity.)

If I myself embodied these virtues, then as a virtuous man—a virtuous men's liberationist—I should proceed with the on-going work of men's liberation without feeling that I should be rewarded for this virtuous conduct. Hence, I must here acknowledge that I have set forth what may seem to be a mixed message about whether or not I want to be thanked for what I did.

In truth, my attitude on being thanked can best be summed up, simply and without contradiction, by

acknowledging that I do appreciate being thanked but I do not need this. I get my main satisfaction simply from knowing that I have made male parenting more accepted by our society's people and, just as important, more expected by our society's norms.

At this point in our society's history (the middle of the year 2018), potty parity, if not yet a fully-accomplished goal, is fast becoming the norm. Local battles remain to be fought, but social attitudes are making many of those battles unnecessary. The crusade for potty parity is, at this point, a virtual victory. Am I elated? Yes, but in a quiet way. I am glad the battle feels almost over. I am glad that fathers are finally getting what they deserved all along.

HOW THE POTTY PARITY WIN WAS UNIQUE

(OR)

YOU CAN'T TOUCH AN ABSTRACT IDEA

BUT YOU CAN TOUCH A CHANGING TABLE

There is one aspect of the potty parity victory which stands out in an unusual way: There are some long-time

veterans of the men's liberation movement who look back at their many decades of men's liberation work and think to themselves, even say to each other, "We didn't really accomplish anything. Society was changing already, and all these changes would have come about anyway, without our work." I strongly disagree. It is no coincidence that just when men's liberationists were talking about making men's sexuality more free, and making men's health issues around their sexuality less taboo, people who occupied high public positions began talking openly about these matters whereas less than one decade before they would have entirely ruined their public reputations with such talk. Think of Bob Dole's crusade. This former Kansas Senator lost the 1996 run for President, but he also lost something else in December 1991 when he underwent an operation for prostate cancer and lost his prostate. Showing exemplary courage, in a very short time he issued public statements about his situation, and soon was giving speeches and interviews about the need for awareness of, and a proactive approach to, prostate cancer. He very soon was the foremost spokesman in the entire world on behalf of raising awareness about prostate cancer. Then he took another step.

In 1998, on CNN's Larry King Live, he disclosed in an interview that he had been in a clinical trial for testing the erectile enhancing drug (EED) Viagra and now he regularly used it. So thus he became a public spokesman for medical treatment of this problem, and his wife Elizabeth, if less overt about the matter, made comments endorsing such drugs. A similar campaign would be marshaled by U.S. General Norman Schwarzkopf who commandeered the Gulf War of 1990-1991 that led to a decisive victory for the United States. After this victory he showed the courage to pointedly criticize many top U.S. officials for their poor management of personnel in the War and also for their failure to properly secure what they had won. But then in summer of 1994 he would fight a different battle when he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. On the day of the surgery he told his aide to be open with the public about the entire situation. Due to advances in surgical techniques since Bob Dole's operation, after the removal of his prostate Schwarzkopf experienced neither incontinence nor erectile dysfunction.²⁸ But he still went on to become a public spokesman for the problem, urging men to be proactive about being examined for prostate cancer and also

telling men to not be ashamed about discussing their post-operative problems. After his operation, he was even visited at bedside by Bob Dole who told him, "Now you can replace me as the prostate cancer poster boy." The General's subsequent willingness to talk openly about this problem—to help other men with the same problem—was done with such candor that soon it seemed as if no one in the country dared stigmatize it or make jokes about it. When some years earlier Bob Dole had "come out" about his problem, people laughed about it and Dole soon became tired of all the Viagra jokes. But in the very short time between when Dole's problem commenced in 1991 and Schwarzkopf dealt with the same problem in 1994, the entire country's attitude toward prostate cancer and erectile dysfunction had changed.

Celebrities like Dole and Schwarzkopf helped change our country's attitude. But they were bringing to society's awareness not a new men's health paradigm but a culmination of much groundwork that had already been laid by the men's liberation movement for this paradigm. Because of this established groundwork, public figures like Dole and Schwarzkopf had a solid foundation to support their work.

They could go forth and publicly grapple with their prostate cancer, and accept it, rather than recoil from it and hide their problem behind a cloak of secrecy. Thus they could help other men deal with prostate cancer too.

Yes; men's ability to deal openly with problems like prostate cancer and erectile dysfunction came out of a groundwork laid by the men's liberation movement. Other changes, too, would not have happened had it not been for the men's liberation movement. Think how today, in 2018, when a divorce happens it is almost assumed—by the two divorcing parents, their extended families, the children, and the judge too—that there will be a joint custody arrangement. What a difference this is from 40 years ago when men were routinely denied any custody and even had to fight for minimal visitation rights. And think of the simple fact that we men can now be alone with our children without being scrutinized by suspicious people who suspect us of being child molesters or child kidnappers.

Still, I have to admit that these are intangible changes, difficult to measure, and therefore it is difficult to demarcate to what extent these changes came about because of the work of men's liberationists. I

suppose it is still possible to wonder if all these changes would have happened anyway—despite the men's liberation movement.

But the potty parity issue—the installation of diaper-changing facilities in men's restrooms and the establishment of nurseries shared by both women and men—is not subject to such uncertainty. We know these facilities came about because of what we in the men's liberation movement did. We know that even if potty parity would have happened eventually, right now this "eventually" would still be holding sway because many men's restrooms would still lack diaper-changing tables.

So it is impossible for me to see a diaper-changing table in a men's restroom and wonder if men's liberation had anything to do with getting it there. I was part of the struggle to get it there. I saw those diaper-changing tables in men's restrooms become a reality. Now when I stand there looking at one, I am aware that here, in front of me, isn't just a compendium of ideas and feelings that can evoke self-doubt and argument, questions and speculation, about how it got there. This is a tangible, material, welcome, and well-used object and I was one of

the people who helped put it there. It is visible proof of what we in the men's liberation movement did. I can see it, touch it, use it. I say to myself, "I did that." Of course it wasn't just me who brought it about, but I allow myself to say this because even with the help of those other men, it still is true: "I did that."

THE BEGINNING CONTINUES:

AN EXHORTATION

Now, on my 70th birthday, May 31, 2018, I finish this book. A day such as this is fit for thinking about one's children, grandchildren, even one's unborn grandchildren. (My eldest grandchild is now 19. My youngest is, I hope, yet to be born.) Reflecting on the effects my work with the potty parity issue has had on other people's progeny causes me to feel a self-indulgent satisfaction. I am both proud and content with what I did in this small arena of men's liberation and fathers' rights.

May younger men enjoy the fruits of my labors. I do not really care if they know I was one of the pivotal people who helped bring about potty parity. I am content with

knowing that little babies in diapers are getting direct care from their fathers. Not only direct care, but also the love that is given increase by direct care. I am thankful in knowing that little babies, because of the trust and bonding that come out of this intimate contact with their fathers, will grow up to be better parents themselves.

In this way, the potty parity issue has given me an understanding of life that is both humanistic and ecclesiastical. I realize that I have earned, and now possess, an authority which allows me to say to other parents: Do not merely perpetuate the species. Improve it.

1 I am not ashamed, I am dismayed, to note that I did not learn of John's death until a little over a year after he had died. Some people did not know they should tell me. Others would later declare, "Well, I thought somebody would have told you!" All I could do was grimly think to myself, "Well, that 'somebody' was 'nobody' so nobody told me." Had I known he was dying I would have tried harder to be in touch with him during that time. I would have wanted to lend him emotional support, also ask him questions about the particulars of that diaper-changing lawsuit, and (not least), inform him that I was writing a book which would be dedicated to him and would give him laudations for the role he had played.

As it was, my last contact with John was by phone on Sept. 27, 2017. Previously, he had lamented significant problems with memory, and in this last phone conversation he pleaded (almost desperately) that I promise to call him again. I could not understand his extreme neediness about this, given that I often called him, but I assured him that of course I would call him again. I soon did—several times,

but neither reached him nor ever got a call back. Only finally did I realize that I had been a dolt to not discern that his sense of urgency at the end of that last phone call involved his awareness that he was failing. I wrote him but got no response. So when I found out that he had died in late 2018, if I was not surprised by his death, I nevertheless felt a keen sense of personal loss.

Our association stemmed from the early 1980s, and became intense during what we called the "diaper-changing lawsuit" on behalf of getting diaper-changing facilities in men's restrooms such as were already available in women's restrooms. We would win this lawsuit, and John considered this the high point of his career as a fathers' rights activist. And indeed he was, in my opinion, the most instrumental person in stewarding and winning this lawsuit. My own view as to what was the high point of John's career as a fathers' rights activist involves his founding (along with five other people) the National Congress for Men, and then over the next several years helping guide that organization as it grew and flourished.

In my working relationship with John I came to admire the ease and amicability he showed in dealing with people.

He had a true sense of charisma, and I can honestly say that among all the fathers' rights activists (FRA's) and men's rights activists (MRA's) in the men's liberation movement there was no one who was John's equal when it came to personal integrity and a sense of fairness. He always had my highest respect and I came to love the man. I also admired him as a father to his children, given his constant commitment to this role and how he always made sure that even though he was involved in the fathers' rights movement he did not let his activism eclipse his parenting.

For me John was an inspiration, an exemplar, a friend. I miss him deeply, and the only thing that helps the feeling of loss is not neglecting to cherish my memories of who John was and what he did for the world. To his wife and children I extend my deepest sympathy, and an awareness that we are companions in our esteem for John Rossler. He was a humble man who became a great man. But because of his humility and modesty he always tried to conceal his greatness. This attempt is the one thing I am glad John Rossler failed at.

² Francis Baumli, Ph.D. (editor), Men Freeing Men: Exploding the Myth of the Traditional Male (Jersey City, New Jersey: New Atlantis Press, 1985), see especially pp. 308-324.

³ This subset of the feminist men came to be known as "the wildman warrior wimps." Many people believe I invented this name (often abbreviated as WWW's) and perhaps I did, but actually I think I first heard it from a friend and fellow men's rights activist in Corpus Christi, Texas named David C. Morrow.

⁴ In making this assessment as to those who have been the most important people in the men's rights activist branch of the men's movement, I am referring to "the first incarnation" of MRA's (as we have sometimes been called). We also have been referred to as "the storm troops" or "the shock assault." However, since time, age, and weariness have taken their toll, we have been replaced. Now the three most important people are Harry Crouch (our current and long-serving president of the National Coalition For Men), Marc Angelucci (an attorney focusing on many major men's

rights issues including the illegality of the male-only draft), and as to the third most important person, I am not yet ready to pass judgement.

⁵ Francis Baumli, Ph.D., Men Freeing Men: Exploding the Myth of the Traditional Male (Jersey City, New Jersey: New Atlantis Press, 1985).

⁶ Herb Goldberg, Ph.D., The Hazards of Being Male: Surviving the Myth of Masculine Privilege, (New York: New American Library, Signet, 1976).

⁷ Divorced Dads, Inc. published a newsletter for a time. It was entitled Divorced Dads, Inc. Newsletter although at times this newsletter referred to itself within its own pages as Divorced Dads Newsletter and in fact was called this when it first came out. While no one seems to be absolutely sure as to this newsletters' longevity, my records (which I believe are complete) comprise a file of all their newsletters which I was able to collect and, based on the slightly uncertain opinion of Jack Paradise (their founding president) and the judgement of other

members of the Kansas City chapter, I am fairly sure I have a complete set of what they published. My file contains 18 issues:

Nov. 1982

Dec. 1982

Jan. 1983

Feb. 1983

Mar. 1983

Apr. 1983

May 1983

June 1983

July 1983

Aug. 1983

Sept. 1983

Oct.-Nov. 1983

Dec. 1983

Jan. 1984

Feb. 1984

Mar.-April 1984

May-June 1984

July-Aug. 1984

This file, with the newsletters, is now housed at THE CHANGING MEN COLLECTIONS which is a special collection in the library of Michigan State University at East Lansing, Michigan.

8 Francis Baumli, Ph.D., "Lest We Forget: Father's Rights Must Not Exclude Fathering (A Reply to Doyle and Rossler)," Legal Beagle: A Family Law Reform Newsletter, May 1986, pp. 15-17. [Note that in the above title "fathers'" was not the intended spelling. The spelling as "father's" is correct because I intended the word to be singular, not plural.] [Note, too, that this lengthy quote is done in a different font than the rest of the article. This is so I do not have to set it off with a "double-indent" which in my opinion would detract from the flow of reading.]

9 Here is an example which plagues, but necessarily characterizes, this book. The uncertainly, or lack of specificity, of many dates does not always stem from lack of recorded history. Rather, it stems from the fact that

the temporal occurrence of transpiring changes can be vague, nonspecific, or protracted. The ERF split was a process, occurring from 1983-1984, and one could not possibly pick out an exact date when the split happened because no two people possessed quite the same perspective as to when the split finally was definite, and also because there never was any kind of formal vote, nor any formal resolution, that dissolved ERF.

¹⁰ Currently an attorney named Sari Friedman, who has one full partner named Andrea Friedman and five "Associate Attorneys," stewards the Fathers' Rights Association of New York State which is now called F.R.A.N.Y.S. It is described as a charitable not-for-profit all volunteer educational organization in several web pages (<https://www.fathersrightsny.com/about-us/>) that advertise its focus as well as the legal services of Friedman and Friedman under the categories of: Fathers' Rights, Spousal Maintenance/Alimony, Child Custody & Visitation, Child Support, Modification of Support, Paternity. This arrangement allows the name Fathers' Rights Association of New York State to serve as a conduit via which clients

learn about the legal services provided by Friedman & Freidman.

I have twice spoken with Sari Friedman's amiable secretary, Cynthia, who reports that all this happens via a monthly meeting for which there is no fee. Moreover there is no member roster, no one pays dues, and all meetings are conducted by Sari Friedman. She does not bring in outside speakers but rather facilitates all meetings herself. ("She's the only speaker.") There is no charge for attending these monthly meetings but if people want legal advice they do have to come to one of the attorneys' offices and pay legal fees. The current Fathers' Rights Association of New York State is a nonprofit group, but as to whether it is incorporated or has 501(c)(3) status, Friedman's secretary says, "I have no idea." She added that only Sari Friedman would know. I had asked that Sari Friedman give me a call back, and I gave my credentials, but never received any return call. In a final effort to get more concrete information regarding F.R.A.N.Y.S.' nonprofit status—whether incorporated or having 501(c)(3) standing—I made a final effort on 2-11-2020 to gain this information before sending this book off for publication

but was told by Ms. Friedman's secretary: "Sari Friedman was not interested in calling you back."

Some former members of the original Fathers' Rights Association of New York State have considered this arrangement disingenuously self-serving for the law firm. I myself am willing to allow the possibility that this group of attorneys strongly believes in fathers' rights, and even if this law firm does not actually have a functioning "chapter," it perhaps is doing more for fathers than many of the small fathers' rights groups which functioned weakly, sometimes worked aimlessly, and all too soon succumbed because of discouragement, inertia, or financial insolvency. Of course, the work of those early groups laid the groundwork for society being more open to dads having legal rights, such that now a law firm can gainfully work on behalf of fathers since in today's society these fathers are willing to spend money on legal fees because they have reason to hope they are buying justice. Back in the '70s and '80s a father's chances of obtaining justice were so small that few attorneys would even take his case, and when they did, their legal wins were nonexistent or, at best, infrequent and paltry.

¹¹ The presence, and role, of Bruce Gerling alongside John Rossler during many milestones of the men's liberation movement and its fathers' rights activism can not be overlooked. John had vision and charisma but he was lax with details and could frustrate others because of this shortcoming. Bruce picked up the slack for John when it came to details, and himself was an avid, even devoted, advocate of fathers' rights. In fact, it was back in 1980 that Bruce Gerling, along with John Rossler, Tom Alexander, Jim Taylor, plus Joseph and Mimi Barbier, met at a conference in Utica, New York and founded the National Congress for Men. The National Congress for Men (NCM) then would go on to become one of the two most prestigious and effective national FRA organizations in the world. (In tandem with the effective, but much more socially conservative, Men's Rights Association headed by Richard Doyle.)

¹² John Rossler, "Rossler Criticizes Doyle's Machoism," Legal Beagle: A Family Law Reform Newsletter, March 1986, p. 14.

¹³ Tom Williamson and Karen DeCrow, various short articles—a special insert in Transitions 5, no. 4 (July/August 1985), (written in 1984 and 1985), pp. 1-4.

¹⁴ Tim Knauss, "1 Change at Airport Leads to Many More," The Post-Standard, Saturday 12 July 1986, p. B-1. [Since this newspaper's name does not include its city, the careful scholar may note that it is published in Syracuse, New York.]

¹⁵ Tom Williamson, "FRA Wins Law Suit," Transitions 6, no. 3 (May/June 1986), p. 19. [Note that the word "lawsuit" is misspelled in this footnote, but this is only because it was thus misspelled in the title of the article as it was originally published.]

¹⁶ Knauss, "1 Change at Airport," p. B-1.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. B-3.

19 Clarence Petersen, "Time for a Change in Syracuse,"
Chicago Tribune, Monday 6 October 1986, p. 69.

20 Knauss, "1 Change at Airport," p. B-1.

21 Ibid.

22 Note that many of the dates in this book come directly from the Court Docket. A copy of this official docket can be obtained by phoning and then writing the court clerk at:

U.S. District Court
Attn.: Clerk's Office
100 South Clinton Street
P.O. Box 7367
Syracuse, New York
13261-7367

You must provide them the case number, and pay a fee to receive a copy of this docket.

23 I am not completely sure of the exact date this ribbon-cutting ceremony took place. My own memory places it right at the end of September on the weekend. Karen DeCrow remembers it, and wrote about this memory—publishing it, as having occurred sometime in September (1986). (A) One newspaper source states that it occurred "last week" and this newspaper's article was published Monday, October 6,

1986. (B) A second newspaper source, published the next day, also states that it occurred "last week" and this newspaper's article was published Tuesday, October 7, 1986. (C) Since "last week" would have been Sunday, September 28 to Saturday, October 4 this would mean that if indeed it did happen in September (which is what I remember and what Karen DeCrow remembered and wrote about), and if indeed the ribbon-cutting ceremony happened the week previous to the two referenced newspaper publications, and if the ceremony happened on a weekend in September (which is my memory), then combining Karen's assertion, the timing of the two newspaper citations, and my own (not infallible) memory causes me to believe that the ribbon-cutting ceremony likely took place on Sunday, September 28. It is not impossible however that if my memory is not correct, and if what Karen published (almost 26 years after the fact) involved errant memory, then only judging by what the newspapers say, all we can note is that the ribbon-cutting ceremony happened on a day sometime from September 28 to October 4, 1986. However, given Karen's life-long compulsive penchant for exactitude with details, the emotional underpinnings of my own memory—that at the time I

felt glad the ceremony happened in September because that is the month of my daughter's birthday (September 17), my memory that it happened on a weekend, plus the scarcely unreasonable judgement that busy, working fathers would not have time to participate in such a ceremony except on a weekend, all these aspects allow me to feel quite confident that the ribbon-cutting ceremony happened on Sunday, September 28, 1986. But should someone show me a source showing that instead, when the two newspapers referred to "last week" they meant Saturday, October 4, 1986, then I would humbly concede that my 70-year-old brain remembered and reasoned awry (and, exercising all appropriate gentlemanly decorum, I would have to claim that Karen DeCrow's memory also was amiss).

(This much delving may seem like much ado about nothing, but one must keep in mind—by way of analogy—how for those of religious orientation, their ceremonies and rituals often are more important than their particular religion's theology; so also with mundane matters: If in the human realm, the time of a ceremony has importance to people interested in this topic, effort expended to try and pinpoint that particular time is not wasted.)

The three citations above, the first to Karen DeCrow's assertion regarding the date, and the others to the two newspaper articles, are as follows:

(A) Karen DeCrow, "In Syracuse, It Was One Small Change for Infants, One Large Step toward Equality." Photographs by Carl J. Single. The Post-Standard (Syracuse, New York), 21 April 2012, Section A, p. 2. [Updated and amended by the author before subsequent online publication 17 May 2012. This online article can be accessed by typing in the above title. Note that the online version has more photographs than the printed version has.]

(B) Clarence Petersen, "Time for a Change in Syracuse," Chicago Tribune, Monday 6 October 1986, p. 69.

(C) Clarence Petersen [of Chicago Tribune], "FRA Gains Gender-Free Changing Room," Ogden Standard-Examiner, Tuesday 7 October 1986, p. 12A. [Since Ogden Standard-Examiner is a small newspaper, the careful scholar may note that it is published in Ogden, Utah.]

²⁴ Karen DeCrow, "In Syracuse, It Was One Small Change for Infants, One Large Step toward Equality." Photographs by Carl J. Single. The Post Standard (Syracuse, New York),

21 April 2012, Section A, p. 2. [Updated and amended by the author before subsequent online publication 17 May 2012.

This online article can be accessed by typing in the above title. Note that the online version has more photographs than the printed version has.)

25 Try as I might, I can not be sure of the exact date of this production in March of 1988, nor can I locate a date for the actual airing of this segment on NBC except that it was broadcast "that summer" of 1988. I am sure it was broadcast because I talked with some of the activists, including John Rossler, who watched it. They reported that it was well-done but disappointingly short.

26 As a scholar, I wince at not having attained absolute precision in the latter part of the accounting given here regarding the "flow-chart" of events in our lawsuit. I can only plead that, despite a sharp memory and copious notes, some of the dates I can not remember or find. I was not keeping a record of every detail at the time since I did not at all anticipate that one day, in the remote future, I would want to write it all down for posterity. There also

is the problem that I can not readily rely on other men, who were involved in that lawsuit, for information. Many of those men are now dead. I am one of the youngest men who was involved in that lawsuit; in 1985, when the lawsuit was filed, I was 37 years old. Virtually all of the other men who were activists in that lawsuit were several years older than me. Bruce Gerling is a notable exception; he was four years younger than me. However he now notes that he is a grandfather and since that lawsuit happened so long ago it is not something he thinks about. Nor, as is obvious from our recent contact by telephone, does he remember the details accurately. Other men (who are not dead) have either forgotten the details of that lawsuit or now, this many years later, no longer consider that lawsuit an important part of their lives. As for the leading figures in the lawsuit, John Rossler pleads a failing memory. Tom Williamson only vaguely remembers the case and now considers it relatively unimportant compared to other things the men's liberation movement accomplished. So it seems that my memory, and my copious files, remain the last repository of what happened in that "diaper-changing lawsuit" (as we then referred to it). Hence, some of what I

write here can not be attributed to as many sources as I would prefer, or verified by other people, although my thick file of articles from newsletters and newspapers is solid corroboration for what I have written here. However, if in some parts of my writing it seems that footnotes are sparse or even lacking, I concede that indeed they sometimes (albeit rarely) are. Hence I must make the bold (and sadly resigned) claim that I am the authority here because I am the last recourse for, and resource for, veridicality on this matter. Therefore other writers who wish to approach this topic, and use what I have written as a guide, quite often will have to make do with a footnote which begins with the words, "According to Baumli" Surely readers will abide my occasional lapses in being thorough when I cannot provide a plenitude of sources, since I daresay that at least all of the important and crucial events have been placed with temporal accuracy while being given due and thorough citations.

Allow me to add that with regard to many contemporary situations described in this accounting of cases, my sources are from the Internet, so rather than clutter this

account with a plethora of references I will allow readers to simply avail themselves of the Internet as I myself did.

²⁷ For the most part, from here forward, endnotes will not be used for citations. This is because the referenced material is recent enough that it is available on-line, therefore is easily accessible by a computer search, and inserting footnotes, i.e., endnotes (given the proclivity of modern readers—even researchers) would be superfluous or even distracting. As a veteran (old-fashioned?) scholar I wince at taking this route, but I do believe my chosen method here would be preferred by most readers.

²⁸ Leon Jaroff, "The Man's Cancer," Time Magazine 147, No. 14 (April 1, 1996), see entire article, especially the part on Norman Schwarzkopf.

I do not give specific citations for Bob Dole since there is a plethora of sources, both in the media at that time and also available at present on electronic media including the Internet. It bears mention that the sources for Bob Dole are much more numerous than the sources for

General Schwarzkopf because the stigma of having prostate cancer was more entrenched during Bob Dole's bout; hence, his case garnered more public and media attention, some of it (unfortunately) voyeuristic and callously gleeful.