

# Butt Darts

By David Gray

Norton Buffalo was a virtuoso harmonica player with the Steve Miller Band for 30 years, but he was also a friend, a neighbor, and a member of my men's team in 1995. Teams were formed and made up of men who had all participated in a men's 3 day weekend experience. These weekends addressed men's relationship issues with family, women, and other men. The team idea was meant to keep alive, and put into practice, what had been discovered in the Men's Weekend.

Teams usually consisted of 6 to 10 men, met weekly, and took on local community service projects, discussed personal issues with one another, and often went on short bonding trips together, which might involve camping, fishing, hunting, or sporting events. These bonding trips were called Team Aways.

On one particular Team Away, our team was headed to a high desert camping trip. Norton Buffalo owned a 1975 Winnebago Brave motorhome. This thing looked beaten, dated, and abused---inside and out. I hated the look of it, but Norton loved it and often drove it cross country to wherever the Miller Band was playing. It easily held the entire team and all our gear, so this faded green box-on-wheels was our transportation for this event.

One of the symbolic principles from the Men's Weekend, was to remember to be a three dimensional man. The point being, many times a day a man will be called upon to respond to varying situations with different levels of seriousness and maturity. The example used to remind of this, was to have fluid access to three parts of yourself, mental, emotional, and spiritual, represented by: Clint (think Eastwood), Curly (think Three Stooges), and Gandhi. Many men may have had trouble accessing either Clint or Gandhi, but most could easily default to the ridiculousness of Curly.

Each man on a team would be responsible for various duties during any event. One for planning food, one for picking a location or logistics, one for program scheduling, etc., but always someone had the responsibility for planning fun.

We were in the Winnebago this day, settling into the rhythm of the road, reviewing our preparations for our arrival at our intended destination. At one point someone cracked a joke, and I reminded Norton he had been [put in charge of fun and hoped he was prepared.

Norton Buffalo was not known for one-word answers, He could talk the face off a donkey. He loved to pontificate or tell long rambling stories. Some people would say, if you asked him what time it was, he would tell you how his watch was made. But he would just

as easily not settle for words, when a demonstration would suffice. Norton was at the wheel of the motorhome and yelled out to the captive audience, and to answer my charge to his assignment, “Butt Darts.”

“What?” came the response from several men.

“Butt Darts. I’m going to teach you all to play Butt Darts. Grab me a paper cup.”

The motorhome had bench seating along both sides, running the length of the cabin, leaving an aisle in the middle, and access to the driver and passenger seat area up front. Norton got up from behind the wheel and stood in the aisle facing us. We were headed down a long stretch of straight two lane highway at 50 miles an hour. When Norton let go of the wheel and stood up, I leapt forward.

“I’ll take the wheel,” I said.

“No, it’s fine. I want you to play. Now pay attention.”

I was paying attention alright. We all were, but mostly at the fact we were now riding in a vehicle going straight down the road, but we had no driver.

“Give me the cup,” Norton said.

He placed the cup in the center of the aisle between us and proceeded to take a quarter out of the little case he had attached to his belt.

“You take the quarter and place it between your butt cheeks while standing behind this line.” He pointed to the front edge of the two bench seats. “Then you walk up to the cup, stand over it, and drop the quarter into the cup. First one to get it to stay in the cup without it bouncing out or knocking over the cup, wins. Like this.”

Norton then reached behind himself and stuck the quarter in his pants butt, duck-walked up over the cup, and dropped a bullseye into the cup. He yelled, “Next!”, and walked back to his seat and retook the wheel.

We were all stunned and amazed, both that he had done it on one try, and that we were still on the road and alive. That old ugly motorhome never once drifted off course or out of its lane. Cheers erupted instantly, everyone vying for who would try next, but also to retell their own version of how it all had happened, as though none of us had already been there to see it.

That little game went on for miles and was reprised many times, over the course of the trip. Anytime a lapse in the festivities occurred, you could count on someone calling out,

“Butt Darts!”, And the game and the story would start all over again.

The story actually took on new life with each telling. The description of Norton letting this old vehicle drive itself during his demonstration got more dramatic, but laughter turned to tears with each description of which grown man looked the most ridiculous trying to walk with clenched cheeks, and who was actually the ultimate King of Butt Darts.

We all enjoyed immensely that stupid little game, but the look on Norton’s face, watching us, suggested he derived the most satisfaction. He knew Curly would be proud.