

REQUIEM FOR DR. DANIEL AMNEUS

By Robert Lindsay Cheney Jr.

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I am quiescent and circumspect. Sad and reposed.

I just received news that my mentor, the honorable Dr. Daniel Amneus passed away just last month on December 18th, 2003. Like a somber mid-December storm, a great passing has occurred in this nation, quietly, and without fanfare. Like a dark rain, something important has passed us all, in profound silence. But that passing has meant something. I hope to put the words here to show who and what this man was, and what he had accomplished.

Most Fathers' Rights advocates have no idea whom Dr. Amneus was. They have no idea of his foundational contributions to the movement. They have not read his most compelling works. Yet they must. The modern contemporary men's movement and its achievements of the last decade can be directly traced to him. He was not the first Fathers' Rights advocate, but certainly, he was the most concise and eloquent of our forefathers who wrote about Father's and family rights, (at a time when it was not only not recognized, but also openly excoriated). Like Galileo, he saw an immutable truth, and wrote comprehensive text about it; which allowed our modern movement a solid socio-political treatise that indomitably changed the face of fatherhood, and made Fathers' Rights marketable and more mainstream. He paid a price for that dedication and truth: his work was mostly ignored.

I am the direct heir of his knowledge, and carry on his teachings, in words and works. He was a quiet, aquiline man of great intellect; he was the unrecognized sage of our times. He was a vested university professor, a sage, writer and intellect. He lived quietly in Alhambra, California, retired in a modest two-story home. I remember first visiting him in the summer of 1998, when he immediately took me in with open arms. I remember my first night with him, sitting late at night in his dimly lit living room, we spoke of immutable truths. We hit it off from the moment we met. He was in his eighties, and I in my late forties, he took strength from having me there. We spoke of many things and had many give-and-take sessions that first night. We stayed up until almost 4AM before we mutually agreed to go to bed. The resultant days and months during which Dr. Amneus and I visited and corresponded were more like a father-and-son- than a mentor and student relationship. Yet, there was a degree of separation between us, due to both of us having been wounded by the current child support system and the courts that destroy fathers.

His was a likely tale. He and I never went into our personal tragedies, but we did speak about our sons. I knew he also had a daughter and was eminently proud of her, but our conversations and concerns we both had always lay with our sons. I always sensed his underlying angst of his relationship with his son, and we spoke of that. These things brought us closer, and under his guidance and tutelage, I was able to conceive and gain my direction and voice, directly due to his efforts and sage reasoning. Without his efforts, I doubt I could have progressed my work as far as it has gone.

The man was a great intellect, coming clearly from a classical background and training. His mind was eminently empirical, and he countenanced no less excellence in either his work or his students' work. My first book was given to him around 1994

(<<http://www.angelfire.com/home/sufferingpatriarchy/index2.htm>>, and he was greatly

disappointed by it. It was my first edition writing on this subject, and I was quite deflated...as I was hoping for compassionate kudos from him, as every student wants to gain the acceptance of his teacher. But I could tell that it was not the content of my book that disappointed him, but rather it was my form factor: no bibliography, no footnotes. "There's too much wrong with it," was his short review of my first book. Yet, he urged me on, and our correspondence never faulted.

You would have to know the man to understand the intellect. He was nothing like I had ever met. I am a very up-front, confident and forward person. I say what I mean, and when I know my direction, I go without delay or faltering. We could not be more dissimilar. He was a quiet, reserved man. One who treads in a measured pace. When we spoke together, it was a comical sight, as my mind was as fast as his was digestive. I could count innumerable times, when I would posit direct questions, and during my discussion he would completely stop the conversation and go into the depths of a profound silence. He would literally stop all motion and the conversation; and sit and quietly think. During this time, minutes would go by, maybe to a quarter hours time, to my complete astonishment. I would sit and start wondering if he actually heard me. In those early conversations, I found that he did in fact hear me, but instead of ignoring me, he was in fact just profoundly thinking. During our later conversations, when he was in deep reflection, I would just stop and wait for him, totally exasperated. Then, five, sometimes ten or fifteen minutes later, he would begin to answer me; and when the answer came, it was always profound, given in a different light of deep thought which I had not considered.

It was exasperating for me though. I wanted to push ahead, and suck all his knowledge from him. Sometimes I felt our relationship had developed to one where we were husband and wife and just "accepted" the quirky differences between us. But, it must have been a comical sight for God to look down at us, with me anxious, demanding and bludgeoning him forward, biting at the bit, willing the moment to push forward and onward to some higher truth while, conversely, the good Doctor would sit there demurely digesting his thoughts. It drove me nuts.

But we would take great joy in each other. One thing he loved doing was to take me to the Black Angus restaurant. There, he was in his element, holding court, with good food and good wine, and good conversation. But I could see the joy of a child when early evening came, and he wanted to go out. I accepted his excited invitations because he showed a Christmas-like glee in the moment. It was the high point of the day for him, and I would see him revel eating as we would talk intently, and after the banquet, he would grab his tummy, sigh that he was full and then pleadingly say: (*sigh*), "I'm old. I'm so old."

I'd chuckle, and politely differ the reality; yet, the words always worried me. He was advanced in age and feeble, and it was getting worse. I would call him from Northern California or New York, and he would answer his phone in complete disarray, our first five minutes of speaking during these difficult times would contain me screaming slowly into my end of the phone saying: "It's ME--Bob! Bob Cheney!" To his confused reply: "Rob who? Reeny? Who?...Who is this??" he would say defiantly, as if it were yet another phone salesman. After this futile preliminary dialogue which occurred each and every time I called, he would finally say with bright realization and great, excited gusto: "Bob Cheney! How is Bob Cheney today!?" and we'd then begin our conversation in earnest. It made me laugh every time as I unconsciously threw both my arms up in the effort to speak with him by phone...and when I hung up the phone each time, I was drained. It all worried me. One of the last times I spoke to him, he said he was tired of fighting the government, and he saw no redress in the insolence of the Family Court and its related institutions. He had given up hope.

I think him right.

He found me a resource when I was there with him. As I was a systems engineer, and really knew computers, and he was thrilled having me there with him to assist him. I'd be downstairs writing and he'd quietly beseech me for help upstairs. I would go up through the winding catacomb of his home, threading my way through walls of books and newspaper clippings and other reference works which were quite considerable and piled in every conceivable place. Like landmines in an Iraqi desert, you'd never know when a tower of paper or books would suddenly come tumbling down. There, in one corner of the upper room, cramped by piles of paper around him, he sat in sartorial splendor of his own making. The quarters of his computer were cramped, with everything inaccessible around him, with his inaccessible printer sitting right behind him. You'd have more room sitting in an F-18 fighter than typing at his computer. Yet I would sit there and he'd stand behind me, and we'd converse as to what he wanted, and he'd be so thrilled and thankful when I solved his problem. I knew he needed help and I wanted the best for him; I would have loved to have someone there to help him all the time. I knew there was a part of him that was lonely...and that needed this safety and attention. I could tell he needed me there in me being with him. There was a bond that developed, one of trust and understanding, which was very remarkable in both our lives.

I remember those days of bright sunshine, of his blue pool which I would swim laps in. Of his quiet home cut silently by the right light coming in through his back yard. His quiet cats that danced quietly about his house as my mind was working and stimulated. I remember his racy red Dodge compact that he drove with all the alacrity of an eighty-year-old. He lived comfortably, but he hurt within, like all men who have gone through life having their children removed from their lives. Both he and I, like most men, were playing wounded on the field of life, quietly pacing each day.

He wanted to help others...so he took the tools of his trade: his mind, his teaching and his writing and applied them to the current problem of modern Fatherhood. The Fathers' Rights movement has no idea of the treasure it has lost. A great national treasure has passed from our midst, and there is nothing in recognition. Only silence. We should mark him better, and defend not only his name but his work for all time to come.

His first book on Fathers' Rights was a book called *Back to Patriarchy*, printed by Arlington House Publishers in June of 1979.¹ I read the book, and although it was good, it had not truly established his voice. It was merely the first gauntlet thrown to the floor, which would later be the basis of his further ideas of development into Patriarchy, which progressed with his other works. His second work was *The Garbage Generation*, published under his own label of Primrose Press (1990), which was a book that finally came into his own. This book was clarity and had defined not only the standards of Fatherlessness but had established the watermark of the modern men's movement. All Father's Advocates owe their work to *The Garbage Generation*, yet; the future was to arrive in his next book.

I first came upon *The Garbage Generation* in about 1992 and was very impressed by the work and not only in what it said, but the definitive and empirical truths it produced. My work up to that time was related more to law and how it related to fatherhood...and I was floundering. Like attempting to make anti-matter with pick and shovel, I just didn't have the tools with which to progress. It was Dr. Amneus next book: *The Case for Father Custody*, Primrose Press (2000), which truly opened my eyes.

We had already been conversing by then, having one John Knight of the Father's Manifesto, who saw similarities, enough to bring us together. Dr. Amneus had graciously given me a pre-release copy of *The Case for Father Custody*, and the second I read it, I fully understood its import. I saw both the past and the future at once, after reading this watershed work. I knew it was the answer. My further research has affirmed his work.

This was a body of work that is the watershed of our movement. Where contemporary men and author's have written mere exposes, such as Dr. Warren Farrell's *The Myth of Male Power*, Penguin USA (2001); Dr. Wade Horn's *The Fatherhood Initiative*; Jeffery M. Leving's *Fathers' Rights: Hard-Hitting & Fair Advice for Every Father Involved in a Custody Dispute*, HarperCollins (April 1997); as well as Dr. Steven Baskerville's work; David Blankenhorn's *Fatherless America*, etc., it was Amneus who wrote to the breadth of humanity. Where modern writers speak to the illness, Amneus addressed and uncovered the genetic code and model. He gave us the answers, deep within his intrinsic thoughts, his profound insight and empirical and definitive proofs. He gave us the Fatherhood genome and revealed every code throughout its DNA. Our movement quietly stands on Amneus, and most people have no idea of these facts. It is not only the men's movement, who in the future, will appreciate his work, but rather, it is humankind who will also begin to understand his work as future generations read it by and through the doctrine of necessity. Like the great classics of our time, *The Case for Father Custody*, will be a definitive work about Fathers' Rights which will stand separate from all others lesser works. It is the classic of our time. We must respect that and pay homage to that fact.

Most people do not read Amneus. They do not know he even exists. However, when they are introduced to his work, the reaction is profound. To put it succinctly, his work is irrefutable, non-rebuttable. It is the duty of any true Fathers' Rights advocate to read Dr. Amneus' *The Case for Father Custody*. We must make new efforts to adopt Amneus work into the Lexicon of the modern Fathers' Rights movement. It would behoove us to categorically demand that each of his works be in each and every library throughout the United States.

Sadly, as he was with my work, he was critical of his own creation. I kept on urging him to continue his work to produce another progressive volume to raise us to an even higher level, however; he was consumed about going back and redoing his work and even renaming the title. I did everything to dissuade him, as he was not convinced of its veracity. As we spoke of these things at length, he knew I would ennoble his work, and yet, he would grudgingly accept my kudos at arm's length, with trepidation, but he was always driven to better it. I kept telling him, however, that his work needed no further redoing or modification. Others and I recognized it as a monumental work that shaped the modern men's movement in the United States and beyond.

I am reminded of my brother now. When I first transferred from Humboldt to Chico State University, I received a desolate call from the East Coast. My brother (eighteen at the time and in his first year of college) had dived into a river and inadvertently hit his head on a rock and drowned — a needless and bitter tragedy for me.

When I came back to California, I attempted to return to study but could barely sleep. I could not reconcile the loss. I could not be consoled and, instead, withdrew. I remember walking one very late night, unable to sleep, thinking about him, weeping inside at his thought. As I walked in the dark silence, I heard a song, way, way in the distance, haunting. It went:

*Just yesterday morning they let me know you were gone
Susanne the plans they made put an end to you
I walked out this morning and I wrote down this song*

I just can't remember who to send it to

*I've seen fire and I've seen rain
I've seen sunny days that I thought would never end
I've seen lonely times when I could not find a friend
But I always thought that I'd see you again*

*Won't you look down upon me, Jesus
You've got to help me make a stand
You've just got to see me through another day
My body's aching and my time is at hand*

*And I won't make it any other way
Oh, I've seen fire and I've seen rain
I've seen sunny days that I thought would never end
I've seen lonely times when I could not find a friend*

*But I always thought that I'd see you again
Been walking my mind to an easy time my back turned towards the sun
Lord knows when the cold wind blows it'll turn your head around
Well, there's hours of time on the telephone line to talk about things to come
Sweet dreams and flying machines in pieces on the ground*

*Oh, I've seen fire and I've seen rain
I've seen sunny days that I thought would never end
I've seen lonely times when I could not find a friend
But I always thought that I'd see you, baby, one more time again, now*

*Thought I'd see you one more time again
There's just a few things coming my way this time around, now
Thought I'd see you, thought I'd see you fire and rain, now*

As I heard this song I was stung by its sweet soliloquy and music. It pained me to hear it. And now, hearing of Dr. Amneus death, the song returns and haunts me and plays in my mind.

And I am sad.

The Fathers' Rights movement has lost a great man. We have lost others before him and continue to lose those who have given so much to our cause. We must recognize these great men, and begin to place them not only in our minds, but into our monuments, so we not only do not forget them, but more importantly, we must not forget their words and their work. It is time we start making the public recognize these people's dedication and work, which, in this one case, should withstand the test of time.

Socrates once stated that it is the duty for every student to surpass his teacher. My work now, is clear and well defined.

However, it is now up to you not to forget Dr. Amneus and what work he did, and the profound words he spoke in our behalf. It is up to us to stand up and not only to say his words, but more importantly to understand them. Then, we must teach them.

Amneus work should be required reading for every college student in the United States. We should teach Patriarchy, with more veracity than we do feminist rights that now dominate our university training curriculum. We should venerate and remember not only him, but others within our movement, like Mr. Mom and others who have with great dedication, kept our faith. It is time to venerate those who came before us, and gave us so much, and left us with the treasure that it is up to us to carry forward.

We are about to do great things. We are about to stand on our own two feet. It is time we acknowledge those like Dr. Daniel Amneus and make them monuments to be remembered by and admired, for they have set our compass and our future. By forgetting them we would be negligent in our duty.

Remember Dan. He was my mentor. I am in fact, his student, and his prodigy. We all are.

1.) Amneus other works were: *Mystery of Macbeth*, Primrose Press (May 1983) and *The Three Othellos*, Primrose Press (March 1986). He was a University English professor, and he was an expert on Shakespeare and his works.