

Vestal Writer With a New Book About Schizophrenia and Depression

Dave Elder, a Vestal graduate from the class of 1969, recently wrote and published his first book, entitled *Expecting the Broken Brain to Do Mental Pushups* -- a Personal Journey to Understanding Schizophrenia and Depression. The woman on the cover of his book, who is one of the main characters of the story, is also a Vestal graduate, but from another era -- the class of 1942. Dave's mother Geraldine taught him a lot about schizophrenia, without ever intending to do so. And while he lost his class ring somewhere in the shuffle between Vestal and the other places he's lived, he still has her class ring, from 1942.

Other Vestal graduates figure prominently in the story as well, including his older brother Donald (class of 1968), his younger brother Vernon (class of 1973) and his boyhood friend D (class of 1971). D's real name was Dave Howland, and his family owned Howland's Grocery in the 1950s and early 1960s, which sat at the eastern junction of Owego Road and the Vestal Parkway, which is now Route 434 but was then Route 17. That building later became the Timothy Mark Beauty Salon, and presently is available for lease.



Why did he write the book? After he finally got to a basic understanding of schizophrenia and depression about a

decade ago, Dave started to become aware of how much other people generally misunderstand them, just as he had done. He realized that the understanding which professional psychiatrists and psychologists have worked so hard to achieve has largely not filtered down to the general public. He doesn't fault professionals for not making their knowledge better understood by the general public, because that's really not their job. As he sees it, they've got plenty to do with just caring for their patients and trying to advance their own understanding of the conditions that those patients suffer through.

The persistence of this general misunderstanding regarding particular psychiatric issues gave Dave a compelling reason to write about *Mental Pushups* and it comes from a different perspective than most other books on this subject -- that of the caregiver. Some of those suffering from mental issues have written books, such as Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* which Dave mentions at one point in his story, as well as professionals who have shared the knowledge they've gained along the way, such as Dr. Nancy C. Andreasen's *The Broken Brain*, but Dave has not yet found any books that approach the subject from the point of view of the caregiver, and those who find themselves caring for someone with these kinds of mental issues do truly need to understand them as much as possible.

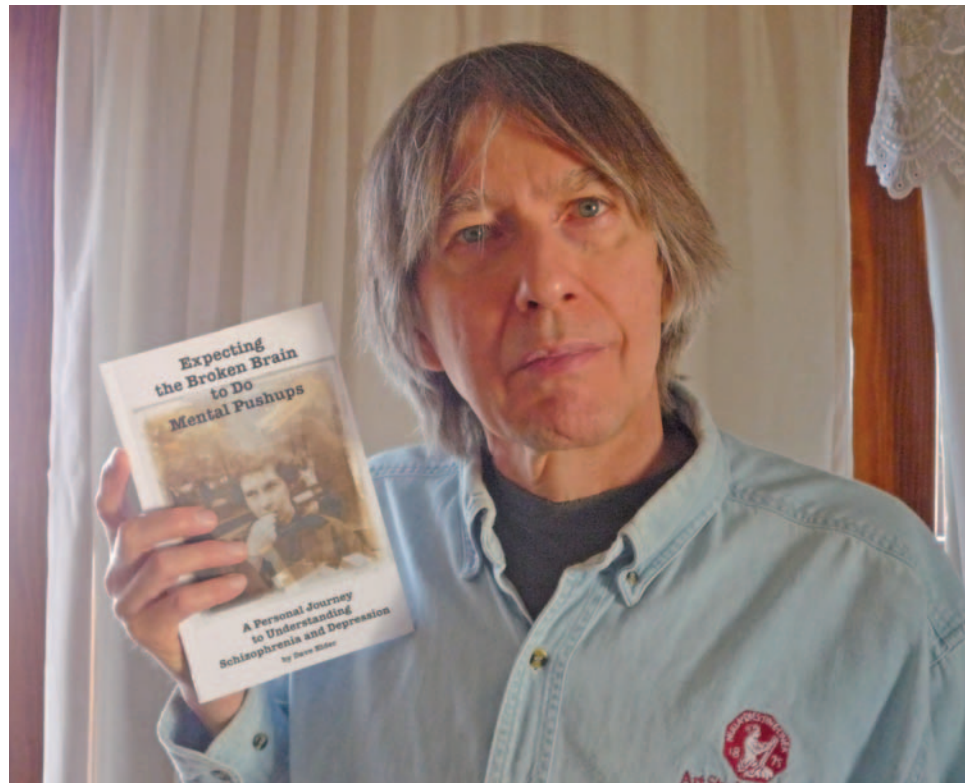
In addition to the Vestal graduates and a family story which originates from his Vestal home, Dave's book has one other odd connection with Vestal -- the 2011 flood. During the summer of 2011, as he completed a documentary film called *The View from Here* that he had worked on for much of the previous decade, Dave decided to concentrate on writing the book. In the early evening of September 7, 2011, as he typed up Chapter 5, he had finished about a third of the story. He noticed as he typed on the computer keyboard that a police car had set up with flashing lights on the corner of Owego Road and

the Vestal Parkway a short distance from the front of his house, and he guessed that the rain had probably made the water level too deep for traffic on the highway heading east from the house. Some time after midnight the electrical power went off, and it wouldn't come back on in his neighborhood for about six days.

When Dave awoke on the bright sunny morning of September 8, 2011, both the Vestal Parkway and Route 17 (the Southern Tier Expressway) were under water where they pass by in front of his house. What do you do when you can't go anywhere and you have no phone, no internet, no computers, no TV, no stove and no other electronic gadgets to occupy

your time? If you have a book to write, then you write. Dave spent much of the next six days sitting on his front porch soaking up the beautiful sunny late summer weather that followed the storm as he wrote about half of this book. By the time the electricity came back on in his house, and his neighborhood, he had only a couple of chapters remaining to complete his story. Following the return of normal life and its distractions, Dave would need some time to finish those final chapters, and then work through all of the necessary steps to bring a book project to completion and into print, but finally he has the finished book in hand.

In his first year at Northwestern University, after graduation from VHS in 1969, he had a roommate who told



Dave Elder holds up a copy of his new book on schizophrenia and depression written from his perspective as a caregiver

him, "You should write about what you know. What do you know?" Dave replied that what he knew about was his family, and he didn't think anyone would want to read about that. Of course, he also didn't have any particular understanding of his family to share at that time, but now he does. Now he has a story to tell about his family, and a compelling reason to tell that story, in a book called *Expecting the Broken Brain to Do Mental Pushups*.

Locally you can find Dave's book at River Read in Binghamton and Books I Should Have Read in Endicott, and you can also get a copy from Amazon.com in either print or kindle form. For more information about the book, check out the website MentalPushups.com.

Vestal Swimming & Diving . . .

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Elmira swimmers or came from behind in the 2nd half of the race. Also notable were some of the sprint times by new swimmers including John Early, Spivak and Lucas MacFadden.

Vestal 105 – Elmira 69

200 Medley Relay – 1st Elmira (1:51.18); 2nd Krauss, Reester, Jeff Zhou, Wang (1:52.82);

200 Free – 1st Bowen (1:56.26); 2nd Harlan;

200 IM – 1st Wang (2:18.45); 2nd Reester; 3rd Spivak

50 Free – 1st Yoon (22.70); 3rd Klein

Diving (6 Dives) – 1st Griffis (186.20); 2nd Tompkins

100 Fly – 1st Jeff Zhou (1:01.65); Jim Zhou;

100 Free – 1st Bowen (52.16); 2nd Klein;

500 Free – 1st Yoon (5:19.67); 2nd Harlan; 3rd Murdock

200 Free Relay – 1st Bowen, Klein, Harlan, Yoon (1:38.89); 3rd John Early, Jim Zhou, David Ash, Spivak

100 Back – 1st D. Parfianowicz (58.59); EXH 2nd Krauss (1:07.78);

100 Breast – EXH 1st Reester (1:07.91); 2nd Wang;

400 Free Relay – 1st Bowen, Klein, Yoon, Wang (3:37.54);

Friday the Golden Bears have their 1st STAC Metro division meet as they travel to Binghamton for a 5:30 PM start. The Patriots feature the top returning Section 4 diver in Deyon Godbay. Diving coach Chris Griffin is looking forward to having a full contingent of divers at Binghamton when another new diver, Joshua Lagerwell, becomes eligible.

A candle
passes its fire
from wick to wick
and loses
nothing
in the act