

Author of popular book

Writer makes a plea for

By TOM DEBLEY

FREMONT — Remember when Edmund Muskie was riding high on public opinion in the 1972 presidential primary?

Until he broke the rules of the masculine ball game and publicly wept after his wife was slurred?

He, as a man, let his emotions show.

"Newspapers all over the country said, 'How can we have a man as president of the United States who will break down and cry in the middle of a crisis?'" commented Warren Farrell, a national advocate for men's liberation.

"Instead of saying," he added Thursday night, "Here's a man who's not emotionally constipated."

Farrell, author of the popular book "The Liberated Man," was making one of many points about male liberation — that task he views as men's need to free themselves from the trap of being a "success object" the way women are regarded as "sex objects" — to an audience of about 200 at Horner Junior High School.

And remember George Romney, who broke the rule of male self-confidence and assertiveness by openly admitting he could be have been wrong when he said he was "brainwashed by the Pentagon?" He too slipped in the opinion polls.

Farrell was reinforcing his point.

Is it individual men, after all, or society that makes men success objects?

Why, he left his audience to ponder, does a nation end up with a leader like Richard Nixon?

"Politicians," Farrell said, "are only what we ask them to be."

Males' entrapment into the masculinity game begins early, he explained by way of a story of his own days as a youngster in Little League:

The youthful pitcher, towel tucked in his belt. The baseball cap cocked just that certain way. The stance. The swagger. That special windup and then the pitch.

"It really didn't make any difference if the ball went over the plate," Farrell explained, "but how good it looked."

And the process continues in later life in different ways, Farrell added.

He recalled an encounter session which involved a successful 45-year-old lawyer. Beginning in high school, the attorney had told himself, he could attain the freedom in his life he desired if he just manipulated the system for a couple of years to attain a goal of enrolling at a prestige college.

And then a few more years of manipulating to enter law school. And then a couple more years in that first job. And then to gain a junior partnership. And then a full partnership.

And finally, Farrell said, at age 45 the lawyer broke down and cried on his realization of having never gained what he originally had sought.

Farrell described a personal experience as a college administrator when he attacked another man's ideas by portraying them as too idealistic and impractical — feminine traits by society's standards — because the other man was getting to present the ideas before Farrell himself could.

He used it as an example of the inability of men to interreact as people because of the drive to succeed, to end up on top.

Men, like women as sex objects, are also manipulated as success objects, Farrell — the only man on the board of the National Organization of Women — maintained.

He cited an Old Grand Dad whiskey advertisement as one example. The ad, he said, appeals to men with the slogan, "If not for yourself, for your image."

Or, he offered in a second example, the half-billion-dollar New York Life Insurance Co. ad which appeals to men by comparing the desire for financial security to running to a touchdown in a football game. In short, winning.

"I think," Farrell provoked, "we need to know what New York Life knows about us that we don't know about ourselves."

Men and women both need liberation, he said, to be able to interact as human beings.

What, he asked without using a question, can a man gain by liberation?

The ability, he said, to direct his own life, to grow in the ways he wants to and not the way society directs, and to be in touch with his emotions freely.

Finally, Farrell concluded on a somber note, to "learn how to love."

Farrell's appearance, preceded earlier Thursday by a visit to Ohlone College, was under the sponsorship of the college's community services division and the Fremont chapter of the American Association of University Women.

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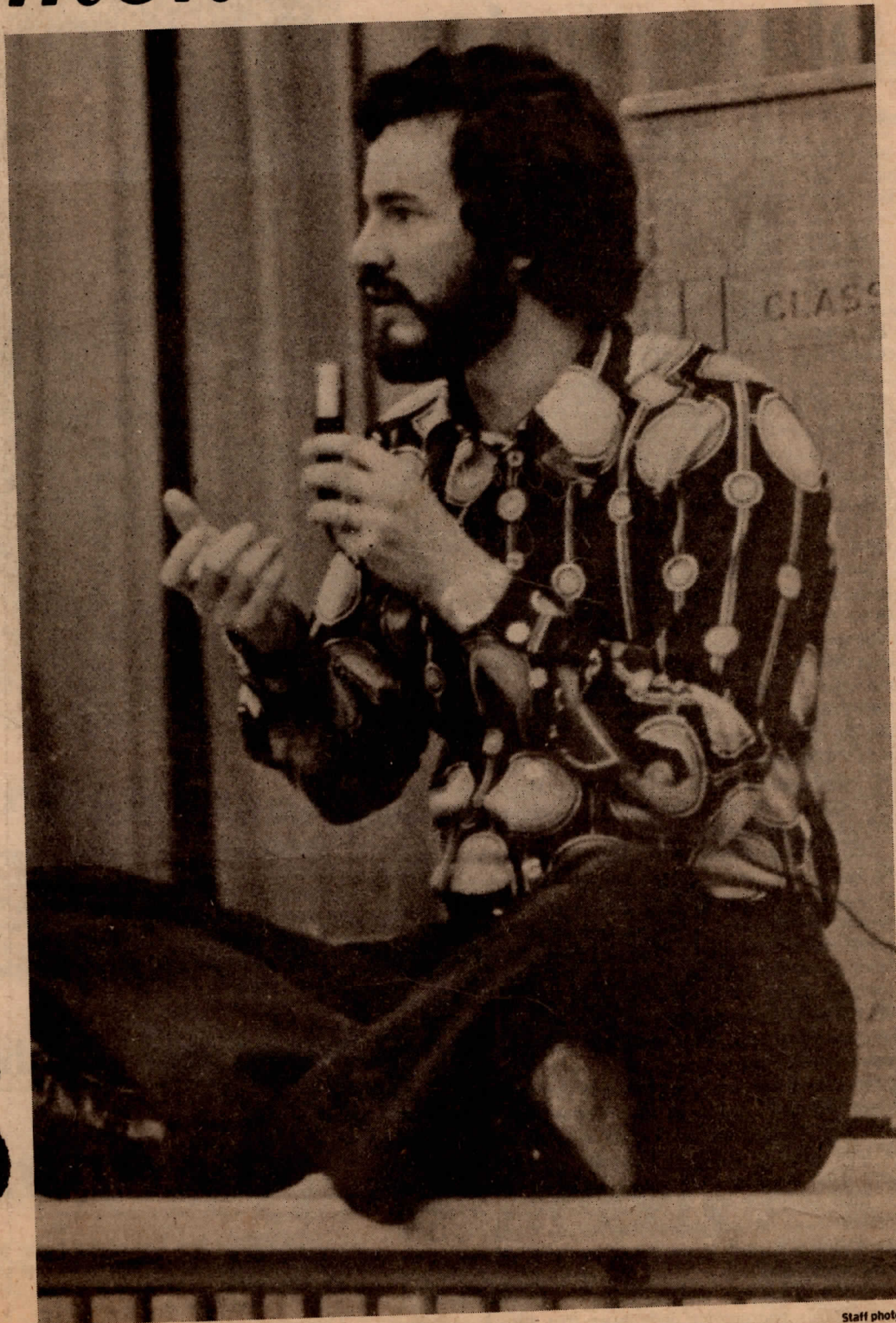
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