

WARRIOR EDUCATIONAL FILMS

STORY SLUG: **NEW AMERICAN HEROES: JIM MITCHELL &
ROBERT BLY
INTERVIEWS**

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INTERVIEWER: **FREDERICK MARX**

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ROBERT BLY, JIM MITCHELL**

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[56]00:02:24

FREDERICK MARX

Tell me about the initiation.

[56]00:03:16

ROBERT BLY

Well, initiation is a big word, and I'm not sure that I had initiation, but I, I learned something about trusting men. I mean we're from the Middle West, Minnesota, great (STAMMERS) grandfather, Norwegian immigrants. My father (CLEARS THROAT) was a farmer, and my brother and I were the two people in the family. So, so there was something involved in initiation just by having a stable, intelligent father, and having to do work when we're very young. So I was out in the tractor (CLEARS THROAT) when I was, I don't know, nine, 10, 11, 12.

[56]00:04:16

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

But my father was amazingly gentle, and I remember sometimes my brother and I would be plowing , you know, at night, and my brother was a couple of years older, and so he was always trying to show that he was more masculine than I was. So he would try to, you know, 11:00, 10:00, I'm ready to go home. And this son of a bitch would keep on plowing, you know, till, what, midnight, you know. And so, but I couldn't admit either that it was too late. So, we would go home and sometimes my father would be there and would've, and cook up some beans for us or something like that, you know?

[56]00:04:57

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And so, there was that gentleness that that was in him and a lot of faithfulness, and sometimes as I got older (CLEARS THROAT) there's a lot of work to do in the summertime and I would, I remember one time I was reading American Boy, and there was a magazine at the time where they had stories about the (WORD?). It was time to go out, you know, and do some threshing, and my father came up to the room where I would lie in the bedroom and, and he said, you know, I don't think we need you today. You know, you can stay here and read.

[56]00:05:33

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And I can't tell you how much that means, that gentleness, and I knew immediately that, that this is what he had wanted to do when he was a boy, and his father would not do that. He was probably too hard times, you know? But we were in better shape. So, I learned, I learned to trust that fair quality in men. So there was something, (BACKGROUND NOISE) a lot of initiation going on there.

[56]00:06:12

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And then, I believe that initiation has a lot to do with learning how far you can push your body. That's why (CLEARS THROAT) some of the initiation that takes place in South Africa or in other places, it requires you to run for 13 miles, or something like that. So, there was something there about farm work that was helpful, because I learned how much energy there is in my body, how far it can go, and especially if there's some, some thoughtfulness of my father involved.

[56]00:06:55

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

If it had been brutal, I knew many men who had brutal fathers, is that right? And that's sort of breaks initiation right there. And you end up with a rage and a fury, and, and pretty soon you're into drugs. You understand what I'm saying? So, initiation has a lot to do with the firmness of the father and also some gentleness there. So, all of that meant much more to me than my mother's kindness meant. And she was a

very kind woman, very thoughtful. And I was the second son and I was more hers than the first son, and her temptation was to make me her son.

[56]00:07:52

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And I don't know how my father managed to get over his anger about that. It must have been hard because he would have seen her responding to me more than she did to him, is that right? Because women have this tremendous affection and longing for a good son.

[56]00:08:19

FREDERICK MARX

One of the key elements of initiation is to cut the bond of boy to mom in order for the boy to become independent.

[56]00:08:47

ROBERT BLY

Yeah, and that's right. And sometimes some really sharp things have to happen with that. I mean there are, there are stories of the, of the son really breaking it violently with his mother in order to get away. And, but the, the father, I don't think can do that break. He has to be there offering the son a better world than the one offered by the mother. I don't know what that is, but, but I know that at the point my father said, you just stay there and read. It'll be all right, today, that he broke my sense that my mother is the one who is interested in culture and all that.

[56]00:09:52

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

So, actually, by concentrating on poetry and culture, that's often thought of as the mother's way, isn't that right? It's often what the mothers want for their sons. But in my case, my father had a tremendous longing for all of that. And since his father died when he was at the university, he had to come home and take over the farm and do all of that year after year after year. And so, when he finally retired, he, he read through, where was that? Those two who wrote the History of Civilization? Men in (UNINTELLIGIBLE) fifteen volumes.

[56]00:10:51

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And I happen to come and seen him on the day that he had finished, and I said, what did you learn? He said, nothing. (LAUGH) So that's a part of that, (LAUGH) I don't know. There was something in that that was also highly male in a way. (LAUGH) What did you learn? Nothing. And so, there's something about, I don't know what that is. But I've done it many times. It's the same kind of thing. It saves you a lot of trouble.

[56]00:11:20

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

Don't explain yourself to everybody. How did you learn this way of writing poetry? Woke up one morning and I knew it. Well, and you know what I'm saying. (LAUGH) So... (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:12:15

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And how do you call that when they're more in their heads than in their bodies? Is that a failure of initiation in itself? Because they've initiated into the mental world but not into the physical world?

[56]00:12:27

FREDERICK MARX

Well, I think so. Yeah. I mean, it comes back to what you were saying a minute ago. You need to learn the capacity of your body, the limits, the reach of your body, what it can do, and what it can't do. And that was one of the vital lessons, I think, that initiation offers. I think there's others but I think that's one.

[56]00:12:55

ROBERT BLY

And what's another one that initiation offers?

[56]00:12:58

FREDERICK MARX

Well, that life is about service to community and not about fulfilling the ego's desire. I think that's another one, that well, and here's a third one but it's related to the second. It has to do with understanding what your purpose is, part of what your purpose is in this life. I think that if an initiation is done correctly, it offers a glimpse of the meaning of the man's life. And that glimpse, that meaning then needs to feed back in the community because that becomes the vehicle, the way in which they serve the community.

[56]00:13:54

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

I think that's true, you know? And so when I got out of college, I, I decided not to go to the university. But I went to New York and I, I just got a little job, a small job, and doing nothing, and, and stayed there by myself, and managed to fall all the way down to the bottom, so that I ended up walking along the street looking for a dime, you know what I mean? And so, you know, if we're talking about initiation, there are things that I think was, there was something that was valuable in that, that if I had gone to the university, graduate school or something, they would have held me up like this.

[56]00:14:53

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

But there's something in initiation about losing all that ground underneath and go (MAKES NOISE) like that. And so it's strange the way, you, you know, we were talking about initiation. I stumbled into one of these things one after the other. So also, there is something about being all alone and having no, no one to help you in any way, no place to sleep. I mean I, I slept in the Grand Central Station several nights. In fact, a wonderful poet that I knew months later, we figured out we were sleeping in Central Station the same night. (LAUGH)

[56]00:15:42

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And there's something there (BACKGROUND NOISE) in which the mother doesn't come to rescue you. And so there's something about not being rescued by the mother that's connected with initiation. It's a hard, goddamn world, you know. And somehow, somehow that's much more healthy than the situation in the suburb in which, well, "you just come home son and I'll take care of you," you know what I mean? I can't mock that but at the same time that wasn't the way it went with me. So...

[56]00:16:28

FREDERICK MARX

Why is initiation necessary?

[56]00:16:39

ROBERT BLY

Well, of course, it's a question of, you know, the way we've been talking initiation is the, is the way that the bond with the mother is broken without cruelty or brutality. And until that happens the son is still possessed by the mother. And my guess is that when Michael need, refused to eat (LAUGH) in the, in the, in the army, you know, and insisted on being by himself and you know, spending about 40 days and locked up in solitary confinement. (LAUGH) I would think that's a sort of a confession to anyone that he's not whimpering for his mother.

[56]00:17:32

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

Go ahead and give it to me (LAUGH). I'm not gonna do god damn what you want. So, it has to be, it, it's got something to do with, breaking the bond with the mother and also following your internal father. So, Michael's internal father was probably much fiercer than his physical father but that internal father was telling him that just because a whole bunch of people tell you, I remember Michael saying, you know, so I went in the Navy and I didn't know anything about it, and they said (UNINTELLIGIBLE) what are you going to do?

[56]00:18:17**ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)**

All right, you guys we're going to attack up that hill and there is gonna be 700 people on top of the hill and they're shooting at us as we go out. Michael said, I'm not doing that. (LAUGH) Oh, yes you are. Oh, no, I'm not. And to be able to hold that, oh no, I'm not. Is a, I mean, you became your own male, you become your own father with that. So, I don't know why I would (STAMMERS) consider myself a model of that when someone like Michael does it in such a vivid fantastic way.

[56]00:18:51**ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)**

But that's why he was helpful in teaching men and he still is helpful. So, so in my case it meant that I, I could take a place outside the university, follow my route that way and, and live without that kind of handout and, well I don't know. So I'm getting into praising myself, I'm afraid here. Probably not a very good idea. Just say I had good luck. (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:19:29**ROBERT BLY**

I had very good luck in not being crushed while I was trying to do this.

[56]00:19:35**FREDERICK MARX**

Well see, I mean, it always fascinates me, I mean, men who become leaders like yourself who have not been given that opportunity of being taken by the community of men out into the woods and said, and taught here is how to be a man, whatever that lesson looks like whether it's killing a lion with a spear, whether it's running 13 miles as you said. Whatever that lesson looks like, you know, my mission, part of why I'm making this film is to put this back on the agenda for the country.

[56]00:20:08**FREDERICK MARX (CONTINUED)**

We need to do this for our young people. That there is a broad, a break in the chain between generations and that the elders are not there to bring those young people forward.

[56]00:20:25**ROBERT BLY**

Yeah, that's called capitalism. Mm hmm. So there's, you can't imagine the heartbreak that's involved in what you just said. (STAMMERS) I mean, the one you showed me about the young man who is longing for a father or a grandfather, whoa, that is so deep, it brought tears in his eyes every time he thought about it. So I think it's marvelous what you guys are doing and in our group when we do our, we still are doing our yearly men's conferences one in Minnesota and one in Alabama.

[56]00:21:03**ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)**

And we've been bringing in more and more younger men, 12, 15, something like that. I remember the first time we did it, I suppose we've been doing a men's conference for five to eight years, and men are used to being with each other and enjoying it a lot. We're doing fine and we've brought in some young boys and I suppose there's about eight or nine of them. And we've hired someone to take care of them because there's no use trying to lecture to them, They don't give a damn about that them about that.

[56]00:21:29**ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)**

But you need someone who could play music and, you know, so we got one of those people in and so they were okay over there by themselves. And then on the fourth morning or so, we brought them in. And here, we were 70, 80 men standing around and all these beautiful guys and men, you know, and it was so touching to see them and how they felt honored by being in the center, we were up around the edges, how much they were honored at being brought in by a group of men, and one of us said, look at how beautiful each of these guys are. And then I said, come on. We've got to give them a gift, you know?

[56]00:22:07

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

So (LAUGH) I was taking stuff off and I said, come on. Give me your wristwatches or whatever. You know, and people were ripping off \$400 wristwatches and going down and giving them to these boys. It was so beautiful. And the men's gesture was absolutely right on, and the boys were stunned by all of this love coming towards them. Just stunned by it. So, you know, that's a, I don't know, and this (STAMMERS) got something to do with initiation, because initiation depends on the generosity of the older men. Having some hard ass English guy, you know, (UNINTELLIGIBLE).

[56]00:22:44

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

You know, that won't do it. It's got to be, otherwise why should they become an adult male if the male isn't generous, hm? So somehow that scene is always stuck in my mind, and we continued to do it. And what we feel there is the (STAMMERS) how generous the older men are and willing to give away and do things and, I love that in men. That they give away without any, not their sons or somebody else's sons, we give it away anyway. So, that's some of the most moving experiences I've had in the men's movement has been with the, the, the boys being brought in and loved. Mm hmm.

[56]00:23:32

FREDERICK MARX

That is a key, huge piece of it, no question. Speak to the ache that exists, not only in boys but in society as a whole, that we don't, we're not fulfilling that function, we're not blessing them. We're not getting blessed. We're not getting seen in the emerging (WORD?) .

[56]00:23:58

ROBERT BLY

Why is that?

[56]00:24:01

FREDERICK MARX

I think there's a lot of reasons why. But I think the biggest one is men themselves didn't get it from their fathers so they don't know how to do that.

[56]00:24:14

ROBERT BLY

You know the word, blessing is a wonderful word. And somehow men tend to think that blessing is something that women can do. "I do the hard stuff." I, I'm going to sell my stuff at night and I get at home by 1:00 in the morning, and you know, I want my son to be in bed and the mother don't, you know what I mean. And so the women do as best they can. You know I can't tell you how much, you can see that mother, how much suffering the women go through in trying to help their sons get blessed and grown up. And they haven't the faintest idea how to do it.

[56]00:25:00

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

The idea that the sons should run for 15 miles never occurs to them. You know what I mean? And you can't blame them because that isn't how you bring up a young girl. And so, they don't know what to do, when to be hard, when to be soft. And so (STAMMERS) I think it's wonderful that (STAMMERS) many of the women that I know, some of the women I know said, listen, you got this men's thing. My son doesn't have any male stuff at all, you know. I want it. Can I send him there? Yeah, sure. Give three or \$400 and we'll take care of him.

[56]00:25:35

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And they're tremendously grateful for that. So what does a boy need besides the blessing? I mean, the blessing is huge. And the blessing he doesn't get from his (STAMMERS) friends, his own age either, is that right? Why not? And they haven't gotten been blessed themselves how could they give it to someone else? What else do you think he needs, this boy, that he can give for men?

[56]00:26:08

FREDERICK MARX

Mission. Purpose. The sense of knowing what I'm here for in this life.

[56]00:26:20

ROBERT BLY

And what is it? What are you here for?

[56]00:26:23

FREDERICK MARX

Me, personally?

[56]00:26:23

ROBERT BLY

Yeah. What are you here for?

[56]00:26:25

FREDERICK MARX

Well, I have a sense ever since (STAMMERS) I discovered filmmaking that (LAUGH) that's what I'm here for. I'm here to tell stories that move my heart that I think are important to show. That, that's what I'm here for. And even over the years where I could barely make a living (WORD?) can. (LAUGH) And I think, well, maybe I should be doing something else. The universe keeps telling me, no. This is what you're supposed to be doing.

[56]00:26:54

ROBERT BLY

And what's the hardest thing that the boys face in trying to find out what their purpose is in the whole thing? What's the hardest thing?

[56]00:27:04

FREDERICK MARX

I'll tell you one thing I know and this is from working with young people right now in L.A. Nobody connects them to their passions, to what their passions are, you know? Nobody says, what do you think you care about?

[56]00:27:25

ROBERT BLY

The schools try to make them behave, is that right?

[56]00:27:28

FREDERICK MARX

Exactly.

[56]00:27:34

ROBERT BLY

And I wonder what answer they could give if they said to the boys, what is your passion? Do you think they all have a passion?

[56]00:27:41

FREDERICK MARX

Well, I, I believe yes. I believe everybody has a passion. I think sometimes it's like, deeply layered over and covered, and it has to be uncovered. I mean, when I work with young people, I tell them what makes you angry?

[56]00:28:10

ROBERT BLY

You know how I've been talking about my initiation, but actually, yeah, it takes place at all times in your life, isn't that right? Yeah. And when you mention passion and I remember Joe Campbell. How much passion he had for what he was teaching, you know, total maniac. And (LAUGH) if you let him go, he'd lecture on mythology for 12 hours straight.

[56]00:28:33

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And so I became a, I used to help him sometimes, you know? And so, he, sort of, enjoyed that, that he knew everything about mythology and everything, and I would know something about poetry. And, and, of course, he was extreme right-wing, you know? (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:28:57

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

He, and, but he used to get furious with anyone who challenged him, you know, when he was younger. But by the time I knew him he was already like 70 or 72. I remember we did something at the Palace of Fine Arts in, in San Francisco. A 1,000 were people there, and, and by, he, and so, anyway, there's a certain moment, a woman stood up and said, Robert Bly is going to give a anti-war reading tonight at the Women's Center. (LAUGH) And Joe's face didn't quiver at all. He just said, let it go, and I said, whoa.

[56]00:29:40

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

(LAUGH) So, so in some way he had gotten over that. You know, he had been blessed in some way by something. So that he was, I mean, this woman was (STAMMERS) saying, you know, Robert Bly is a leftist and he's going to read at the Women's Center, and Joe was able to accept that without mocking me or whatever it was. He understood how that felt, and felt good for me that he would do that. So I loved Joe a lot, and, and he himself, you know, despite his incredible right-wing stuff and, it really got heavy.

[56]00:30:22

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

I mean, I invited him to my conference one time, and it was, you know, from 15, 20 years ago, and he started giving a lecture how if you don't want to be the anvil, you have to be the hammer, you know? And what the fuck is he talking about? He was (LAUGH) talking about bombing Russia. (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:30:46

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

Anyway, so, but Joe, Joe had learned something, you know, about all of this mythology that's all connected with the development of initiation. One story after the other, I don't know why I remember this, but Joe, when Joe and his wife slept in an apartment in New York for years, a one-room apartment where they slept in a pullout bed, you know, at night?

[56]00:31:11

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And so Joe would teach 20 miles away, he'd come back and, and it's Greenwich Village, hard to find a parking place. And one time he came in, drove (SIC) around, and he saw an open space, and he started in, and there was a young woman standing there, you know, she's about 12 years old. And she said, No, I am a spark, I'm a... (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:31:49

ROBERT BLY

She said, you can't come park here, I'm a fire hydrant. And Joe started up his car and went out around it. I mean, there's a mythological moment and he agreed that she was a fire hydrant. Oh, no that was great. That proves even, even as a hard (WORD?) like Joe, you know, understands finally that the whole thing is immensely playful. And she was a fire hydrant. (LAUGH)

[56]00:32:19

FREDERICK MARX

Would you agree that a lot of people want to do the soul work but don't want to get their hands dirty?

[56]00:33:00

FREDERICK MARX

Nobody's willing to look at their own shit, you know. And learn from it. And it seems to me that initiation, rites of passage, whatever you want to call it, is really soul work. In order to plant the roots so that the tree can grow up, then you can ascend to God.

[56]00:33:23

ROBERT BLY

Yeah. I don't know the whole thing about God. I mean, you know God is for when you're 55 or 60 years old. It's not for kids. (LAUGH) and...

[56]00:33:35

FREDERICK MARX

What do you mean by that?

[56]00:33:36

ROBERT BLY

Well, I just mean that this longing for God is way out of place in, in the 16, 17s. They've got it, but there's no chance, so it's better for them to go down than to try to go up. It's the same thing you are saying. (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:33:55

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And that is one thing that culture doesn't teach because in order to go down in a way, you have to give up things, not go to the suburbs, is that right? But the whole culture is always on this thing of going up and that's the thing and in terms you're talking about getting more of what you want. I mean, the whole thing with Bush is an example of that. That son of bitch has always wanted to go up and have more of this, more of that, more everything until you want a whole country. And thousands of people die, you don't care about it at all.

[56]00:34:31

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

So, you know, that we have an uninitiated president is something to think about. And Roosevelt, I have to contrast that all the time with Roosevelt. I mean, the number of intelligent decisions Roosevelt made during the war and all of that. At the same time, Roosevelt had gone through his initiation, his legs were no God-damned good. And he went through an incredible amount of pain in order to even to stand up. You know what I'm saying.

[56]00:35:00

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

So, so this whole question of going down and hitting ground, it as to do with some kind of pain that you accept. And what is being offered to the children now is our, you know, more CDs and more VCRs and you know what I mean, the opposite of going down. Oh, so we're, it's very hard in a country as deeply capitalist as this one to have anyone who isn't as initiated or isn't adult male. And it's getting worse. (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:36:59

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

Well, it's interesting that you've mentioned the religions, like the Jewish one. Why is it that initiation doesn't have to do with the normal capitalist pursuits but has to do with an obedience to some sort of religious tradition? Why is that? (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:37:26

FREDERICK MARX

It puts a person in touch with a higher power. There's something greater than themselves, so that they understand that they fit in to the universe in some way that if nothing else, that their life and that there's life outside and that they need to fit in and..

[56]00:37:45

ROBERT BLY

Yeah, I've heard of (WORD?), and the Rabbi does that by pointing out that there's been a God among the Jews for a long time. In the, you know, (STAMMERS) in the Jewish world, you can't imagine the universe without Jehovah there. I mean you just can't imagine it. It's part of the universe. So, therefore, by becoming entirely secular, as the television wants everybody to be, they're actually blocking initiation. (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:38:23

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And in poetry, we try to do the, something similar. That is the, to, to talk about the intensity of the religious poetry and how it leads you to give up all your little qualities of comfort. Yeah.

[56]00:38:44

FREDERICK MARX

Yeah, because that's, exactly, that's what's required.

[56]00:38:49

ROBERT BLY

Oh and when you think of that, you realize how much comfort is offered to young people now. Having songs written by people their own age, that's a comfort. Totally useless. (LAUGH) Bad art. Not always, but, you know?

[56]00:39:12

FREDERICK MARX

Well, yeah, the equivalent to me is teen gangs because teens cannot initiate teens. You need the elders.

[56]00:39:24

ROBERT BLY

Yup. Well, that's, that's the area where Michael often works, and the absolute heartbreak of the teenage gangs in which, instead of leading them toward the adulthood, that leads them directly into prison where they will be brutalized by, by adults a little older than them. (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:39:50

FREDERICK MARX

You, you, you, you spoke a moment ago about the, the, you know, sort of, exploring the implications of living in this uninitiated world. I mean, you mentioned Bush. I mean, I always mention him as the perfect example of the suspended adolescent, a guy who's a teenager who's living in an adult world who has no sense of life and death and greater value. (STAMMERS)

[56]00:40:19

ROBERT BLY

That's a little frightening. Why is it that the, that the American public can't see that. They elected him twice. Why is that?

[56]00:40:26

FREDERICK MARX

Well, some would argue we only elected him once.

[56]00:40:28

ROBERT BLY

Yeah, but he was so close. (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:40:51

FREDERICK MARX

Well, yeah, because that, that's, you know, adolescent behavior rules our society. (TECHNICAL) .

[56]00:41:02

ROBERT BLY

Oh, that's so heartbreaking. The, the society with the greatest money in the world is being run by adolescents, I mean, that's, that's heartbreaking. So, that indicates that you have more work to do than you would have imagined 20 years ago, 30 years ago, when the lack of initiation is not noticed even in, someone who is running for president. (MAKES NOISE) Yup.

[56]00:41:33

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

In an, in a society that we call a primitive society, they would know immediately whether that man was initiated or not. And the women would know it. And they'd be horrified by some kid who wasn't initiated becoming a president. (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:41:56 **FREDERICK MARX**
Well, they'd feel safe. The women would feel safe.

[56]00:41:58 **ROBERT BLY**
Yes, they would.

[56]00:41:59 **FREDERICK MARX**
They would know that they're safer with a man like that.

[56]00:42:01 **ROBERT BLY**
Yeah.

[56]00:42:02 **FREDERICK MARX**
Well, talk about why it's more necessary for boys.

[56]00:42:10 **ROBERT BLY**
Well, that's a good question and one answer is that women, initiation in the, in the end has to do with the acceptance of pain. And women, at the time they're doing their first menstruations, they have to go through a lot of pain, and they know that that pain has not been caused by anyone. It's a part of the whole process of becoming a woman. And they are so pleased by the prospect of becoming a grown woman and not remaining a girl forever, that they accept that pain, and they know it deep in their bones how important the pain is. And then, imagine what they do when they see the boys.

[56]00:42:54 **ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)**
Oh, it's just one happy thing after another, one happy song after another. Going out, you get in the car and you drive around and this, this, and this, and this, right? It breaks their heart that the, the son can't endure what they have endured. At the same time, the women in old times, you know, participated in initiation more than they do know. And they had initiatory groups, very large ones, to help the women move through that and that's mostly gone now.

[56]00:43:27 **ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)**
But there's that (STAMMERS) wonderful story, I don't know whose it is but I think it's in South America and they're gonna initiate a boy. And then one of the things he has to do is to steal the pot from his mother's own, and this is in Guatemala, he has to steal that pot from his mother's own little house, where the pot is a big part of the living room or dining room. And so, he's got to go and, and steal that and the (STAMMERS), the women go through all kinds of stuff, you know, to help this process go on.

[56]00:43:56 **ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)**
They're all joking with each other and then, so anyway, he, he tries and he comes home and he steals the pot, and he runs down the main street carrying the pot. He's got to bring it into the male initiation hut. And that's one important thing, I, I violated my mother's kitchen. I stole her pot. (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:44:14 **ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)**
And so then, he gets in, he's very happy he's stolen the pot and then, the teacher says, now, you got to bring the pot back without your mother knowing it. (LAUGH) (STAMMERS) So this, this takes days, you know? And somehow, the women all have to be a part of it and they have to make a place where they go off somewhere and he's able to bring the pot back and leave it in there and this, oh, my God, look at (MUMBLES). You understand what I'm saying?

[56]00:44:45

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

This is a whole community of men and women who have tremendous good humor and a lot of sharpness and grasping of human frailties and, and joys, are able to encourage that in the boys. I think that's Guatemalan. You know Martin Prechtel's book? (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:45:22

ROBERT BLY

He's done two or three more but, the Secrets Of The Talking Jaguar, that's what it's called. And that's very funny because when he went there recently to Guatemala, he was, he just ran off in the United States, and eventually, ended up in Guatemala and, and rode across a lake, and there were two small jaguars on each side of the boat when he got there, you know, during that time. And when he met the teacher, he said, you know, "There are two jaguars, little jaguars. And teacher said, well, that means they're spiritually related to the Jaguar.

[56]00:45:57

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

So, so, so then, he knew that about them. So then, so then, he said, you know, oh, this is so interesting with initiation. He said, your animal is a jaguar and you have to make a friendship with the jaguar. A jaguar? Oh. I remember one time, couple of years later, he and his teacher, the old guy's 100 years old, he said, we got to go in the top of the mountain and we go to bless that tree that, that was cut down when the God damned French came here with their helicopters looking for (SOUNDS LIKE) kin.

[56]00:46:30

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

Before I die, we've got to bless that. So he and the old man and Martin go up the mountain like this and they were (MUMBLES). And the old man is taking out his stuff and doing all kinds of initiation work, you know, and blessing and all that and, and Martin feels something strange on his left foot, and he looks down, there's a huge jaguar pissing on his left shoe. (LAUGH)

[56]00:46:51

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

Oh, that's right. So, so, and it was good and he looked down and said something and the jaguar just wandered off. And, and, so then, anyway, when Martin and I were trying to find a title for his book, the, we had about 15, 16 titles, and one night, he called me up and he said, the jaguar came in my dream last night. He says he wants to be in the title. (LAUGH). So the title of the book is the Secrets Of The Talking Jaguar. (LAUGH) That's the title of the book. It's got nothing to do with all of this but it's a good story. (LAUGH)

[56]00:47:26

FREDERICK MARX

It's a good story. What a great story.

[56]00:47:29

ROBERT BLY

Yeah, it is. And so he is one of the, he is one of the fully initiated men in United States. Have you worked with him at all?

[56]00:47:35

FREDERICK MARX

No. I know of him.

[56]00:47:38

ROBERT BLY

You know of him. Yeah.

[56]00:47:39

FREDERICK MARX

I've never met him.

[56]00:47:41

ROBERT BLY

Yup.

[56]00:47:41

FREDERICK MARX

Yeah.

[56]00:47:41

ROBERT BLY

So it's very strange when you see him because he has been trained by some of the very last of the great initiatory people and he carries it with tremendous good humor. And when he comes, he's got all this material with him, little sacks of this and sacks of that, and, you know, he continues to bring, that's the divine being brought in. So, again, we are in that situation. You cannot have a genuine initiation without the presence of the divine.

[56]00:48:12

ROBERT BLY

And I'd say the (STAMMERS), the thing that's, works most against the initiation of young men now, of course, drugs and all of that are a part of it, but the lack of the divine in the American culture. And so the old tradition is very firm. If there is no divine presence, what is the point of a young man growing into an older man? What is the point of going through that suffering that is involved in being an adult and having this grief with your children, this and this and this and this?

[56]00:48:43

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

But, but the blessing of the whole thing is that the divine enters into the man who has had more initiation. And, so, therefore, something else is given to him at the very time that he is, he is going through the trouble of what it's like to be an initiated man, and having to help the young men, and so on and so on and so on. So it's strange. After talking to him like this, we come back to the problem of the absence of the (STAMMERS), divine in Western culture now. (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:49:32

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And Martin always, and you know, what he learned is that your job as a young man is to feed the divine. If you keep that in mind, then you know when you need to bring out the material of a blessing and then, smoking and all of those things. And uh hmm, to feed the divine, that's a strange idea. And we go to church to get, to let the divine feed us. Give me my little wafer, you know? (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:50:28

FREDERICK MARX

Can you tell me if mentorship and initiation are two halves of the whole?

[56]00:50:46

ROBERT BLY

Well, I think Michael is right because, because the question is how much is required from the older man in the initiation of the boy. We're talking about the boy going through this and going through that, and, and so on, but without a mentor as a companion, you know, and spiritually, it won't work. And, and the mentor has to be someone that's not gonna abandon that boy. And you take one look at Michael, you know that whatever happens, if you get in a gunfight, he's gonna be there. (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:51:27

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

You can see it in his face. So, I like that tremendously, that the, that the grown-ups, grown-up men know that they have two jobs, you know? One is to be a decent husband and father to their children, and the other one is to be a mentor to someone else's children. And that doesn't require that immense amount of time. But it requires a generosity of spirit and a willingness to go and look for those young men that need to be mentored and walked with. (TECHNICAL)

[56]00:52:15

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And I know that's what you are working towards is, you know, men don't feel that they are important, really, in the culture. They think that, you know, their, their boss pays them a lot of money, they're not important to the business, they get someone else to do that, you know what I mean? The uselessness that men feel in the huge, capitalist (STAMMERS) culture, it's not the same as my father who knew that if he didn't feed the cows, they're gonna be dead.

[56]00:52:37

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And I, I, he said that to me. I, I, you know, I feel that if I don't feed people some poems, they're gonna be dead. (LAUGH) So, I'm a, that kind of a mentor. But to try to teach the American male that they have a chance to be a mentor for a young man or a group of young men, separately, that'd be a tremendous thing to do. I think it'd be a huge blessing to many of those men who don't feel that they're accomplishing anything valuable in the culture.

[56]00:53:13

ROBERT BLY (CONTINUED)

And they're all the young boys wandering around, unblessed and unmentored, mm hmm. Well, there's nothing more important than what you're doing in trying to bring the older men, capable of mentoring in with the younger guys.

[END OF TAPE: [56]00:53:59]