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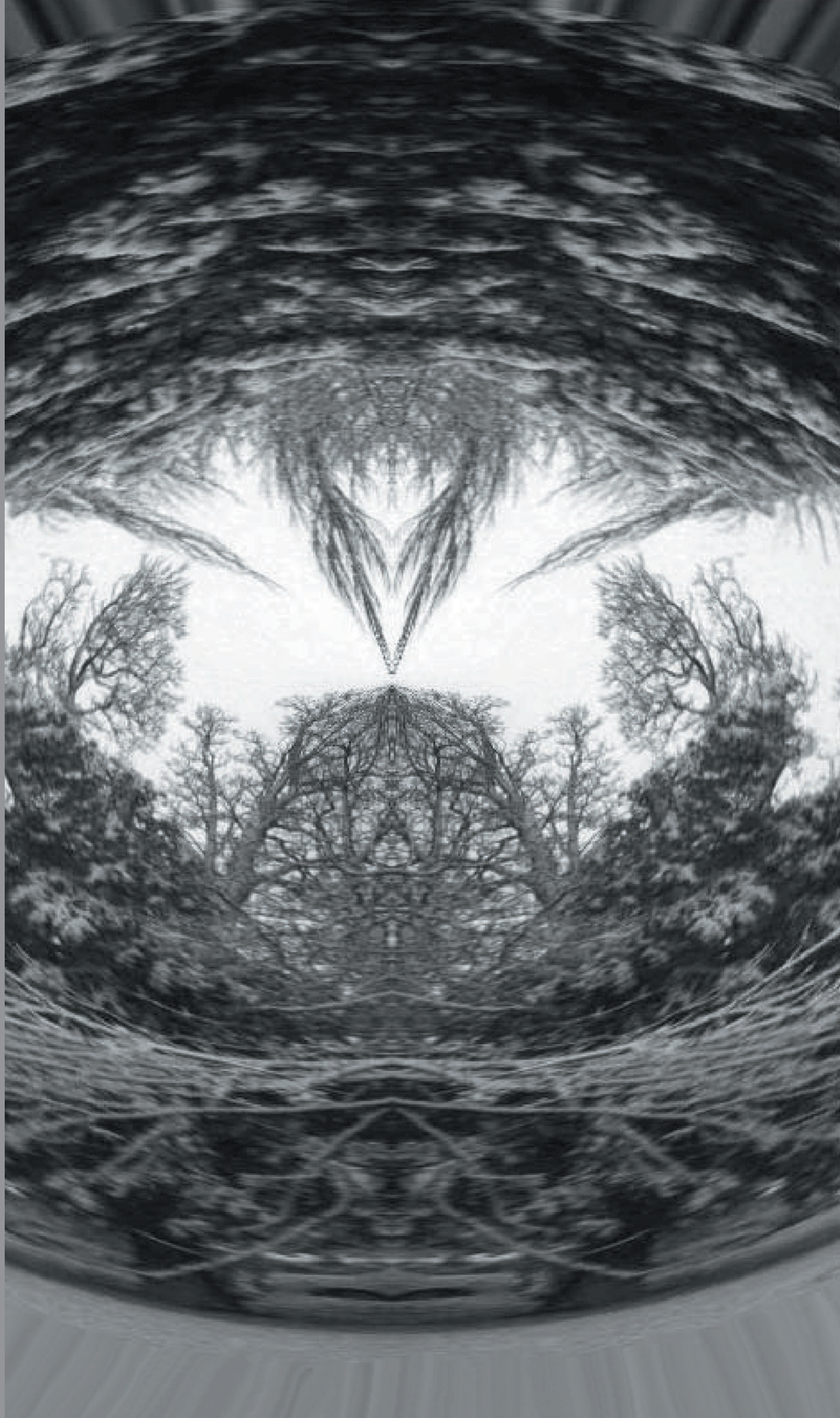
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The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship

Spring 2005 • Issue No. 28





Submissions to Oak Leaves

Oak Leaves is in need of your assistance in filling its pages. Anyone is welcome to submit their materials, whether you are an ADF member or not. The general rule of thumb is that the work must be related to ADF and/or to the Indo-Europeans. Here is a list of the items we are currently seeking:

Issue #29 Summer would like to see materials related to all aspects of the outdwellers. The deadline for this issue is April 1st, 2005.

Issue #30 Autumn would like to see materials related to all aspects of the ancestors and death. The deadline for this issue is July 1st, 2005.

Issue #31 Winter would like to see materials related to all aspects of the three realms. The deadline for this issue is October 1st, 2005.

While we are seeking these specific topics, submissions on any topic are welcome and invited. If you write something on one of the above topics but cannot have it in by the deadline, please send it anyway! The above is a guideline only and is meant to help create ideas for possible submissions. Additional ideas include submissions on specific gods and goddesses. They do not have to be your patron. They can be anyone you have worked with or happen to know quite a bit about. It can be personal, scholastic or a mix of both. Share that unknown god or show a new way of looking at that popular goddess with the readers of Oak Leaves.

We are also still looking for solitary submissions, travel stories, kids materials, personal religious experiences, poetry, book reviews, international news, ritual recipes, movie reviews, festival reviews, birth announcements, wedding announcements, funeral announcements, SIG reports, Kin reports, Guild reports and Grove reports.

Deadlines for submissions are as follows:

Autumn: July 1st
Winter: October 1st
Spring: January 1st
Summer: April 1st

Suggested lengths of submissions are as follows:

Articles (1,000 to 5,000 words)
Short Fiction, Essays, Stories (up to 3,000 words)
Book Reviews (250 - 500 words)
Rituals (to 5,000 words)
Reports (to 1,000 words)
Poetry (length within reason)
Longer submissions are accepted as well.

If you need assistance in any way please contact the Oak Leaves Editor. at oak-leaves@adf.org

For more information please see the Oak Leaves web site at:
<http://www.adf.org/articles/publications>



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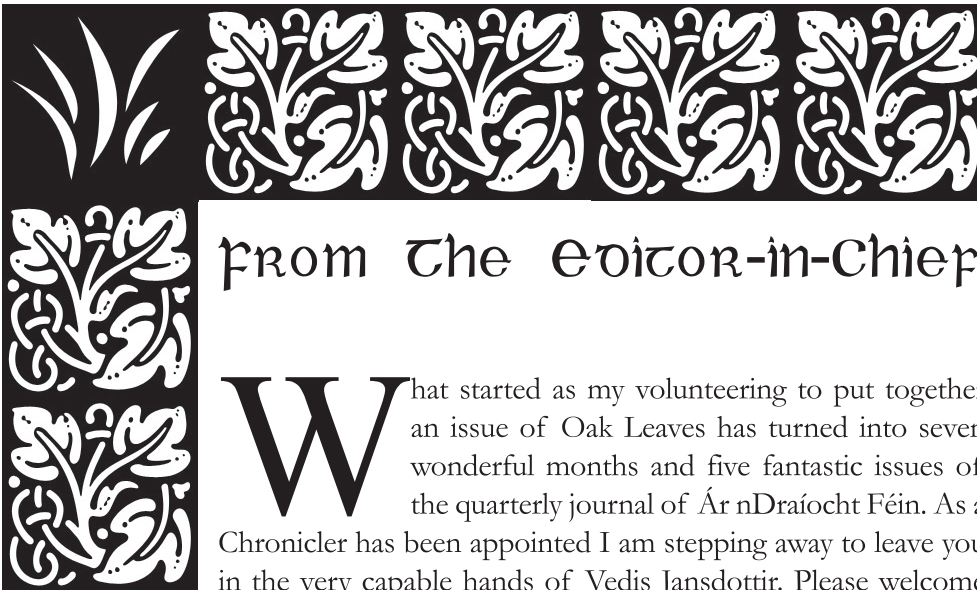
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from The Editor-in-Chief

What started as my volunteering to put together an issue of Oak Leaves has turned into seven wonderful months and five fantastic issues of the quarterly journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin. As a Chronicler has been appointed I am stepping away to leave you in the very capable hands of Vedis Jansdottir. Please welcome her in to this new position by filling her mail box with your submissions.

I would like to take this time to thank everyone who has assisted me to bring together these issues: Vedis for being a joy and delight to work with and always there when I had a question or problem; Hester for doing the dirty work of gathering the news for Falling Acorns; Jenni for rooting from the sidelines; Selene for her kind words at Summerland and her handling the advertisements; Joey for writing a wonderful series of articles for the solitary members of ADF; Linda for her guidance and wonderful proof reading skills; Mike, my dear friend, for spending hours proofreading and tracking down anything I asked for; Hugh for all of his extremely hard work; Kirk for taking the time to answer me and making me smile; and a hearty thank you to Gannd and Skip for taking a chance on me and letting me to help out ADF. Additionally, I wish to thank my husband, Ratrija, for everything.



Narabali wearing a sari in India (February of 2004)

Most importantly I wish to thank all of the ADF members who submitted work to Oak Leaves. Without you there would be no publication and that is why we on the Oak Leaves staff are eternally grateful that you took the time to share with us. We hope that you will share again and that we will soon see submissions from new names as well.

May the Devas shine upon you and bless you with a hundred autumns,

Narabali Aganyì

Editor-in-Chief

Dance Guild Chief

Preceptor/Liturgist of Aus Dhwer

Including Our Children in Our Druidry

by Natalie Erin Smith

(Lady DragonStar)

The ritual is written, the site is prepared, the altar is in place and everyone is dressed. There is nothing missing. Or is there? Amongst all those gathered to celebrate the high holy day, there are no children. No little wee ones scattered about, chattering with excitement. None of the timeless wisdom in the form of their joyous chaos. It is not that no one in attendance has children, it's just that, through implication or out-and-out statement, children are not welcome, nor is there a place set aside for them.

Unfortunately, I've seen this scenario played out many times where I live. Pagan parents are either asked to find a sitter, or they are discouraged from attending. It does not matter that both parents are Pagan and raising their children on that path. I myself left a coven that I helped to found when, through a turnover in membership, a coven originally founded to be a place where members could raise their children in a welcoming and wholesome Pagan community became "no kids allowed". These new members, by the way, were well aware when they joined that

ours was a kid friendly coven. As the only members at the time with a small child, my husband and I found ourselves more and more ostracized until we finally had enough.

Kids learn from what they see. If they see a welcoming open community that sets a place for the children, they will grow up feeling welcomed by the Pagan path. If they grow up feeling not welcomed and excluded, they will soon decide that if the Pagan community does not want them, and then they do not want the Pagan community. They will seek out a place where they are welcome. After all, I've never seen a Christian church where children are unwelcome, in fact the more fundamentalist they are, the more they seem to seek out children to convert. Don't get me wrong, I want my children to know that I will honour their choices of beliefs whatever they may be, but I don't want them to not feel welcomed within my own faith.

Children add a whole new dimension to ritual practice. Including small children in ritual is an exercise in patience,



but one which I have never regretted and have always benefited and learned from. It fosters a sense of humour that I've found to be very beneficial in celebratory rites, as it prevents the practitioners from getting too stodgy in the practice of ritual. Children, having more recently crossed over the Rainbow Bridge, are closer to the Spiritual realms, and therefore, I have noticed that the Gods often teach their lessons through them in ritual. We just have to be willing to listen. For instance, children are often drawn to the tools of divination. Special attention should always be paid to any runes or tarot cards they pull out of a stack or add to a reading, as these seem to always have a great significance. Likewise, when close attention is paid to what some describe as "distractive behaviour" one can most of the time learn a deeper and more timeless lesson than the one scripted for the ritual.

Older children, I believe, should always be given a part in a ritual fit to their abilities and interests, that is assuming that they wish to participate. Children should never feel forced to attend or be involved with a ritual or celebration, nor should anyone else for that matter. Younger children seem to always find their own way of adding to the rite. Just the other night during our Yule ritual, our older son Collin and and Jynx, one of our "kitty babies", added a joyous sense of lightheartedness by tucking under the altar cloth and playing "toe goblins", snatching at the feet of participants. This may not sound pleasant, but I assure you, a great time was had by all.

Now I also know that this arrangement may not be for all practitioners. There are also certain ceremonies and rituals during which children's participation would not be appropriate. But I feel that we can and should make the high holy day celebrations as child-friendly as possible, or at the very least offer a child-friendly ritual or related activity in addition to the one for the adults only. I, for one would love to see a ritual written and performed entirely by the children of a grove or children at a festival. Children have much to teach us which we have forgotten.

On a related note, I can't help but notice that on the various Pagan email groups and message boards which I frequent, the parents groups are far too silent. This needs to change. Those of us who are parents need to create that Pagan village in which to raise our children. I invite you, either through the

ADF-Parents list, or through contacting me privately at ladydragonstar@hotmail.com, to share with me your thoughts and ideas on raising spiritual children, so that I may compile them to one day publish a resource for Pagan Parents everywhere.

There is no magick more pure or powerful than that within a child. Unfortunately, through the course of growing up in our unbalanced society, many of us have lost that closeness with the source of wonder and magick that is in everyday life. As Pagan parents, we have the power, and I believe the duty, to keep our children's connection to the magickal view of the world alive. That, I believe, is the key to a better future. If we isolate our children and make them feel unwelcome in the Grove, well, then I'm afraid that the Neo-Pagan movement will die out with our generation rather than grow into the magnificent future we all know it can -- and should -- grow into.





Living in Surrender

By Rev. Kirk Thomas

What a word, “surrender”! It conjures up images of soldiers in old war movies with their hands in the air, being marched off to prison camp by their smirking, armed enemies. Or perhaps the image of ancient, defeated warriors comes to mind. Stripped of their armor, with hands tied together, they are led off to slavery or sacrifice. Or perhaps just white flags, waving in the air, say it all.

But how about seeing another image, such as the Roman Forum in 390 BCE? It’s hot and dusty, and the city is strangely quiet until the silence is broken by the sound of invading Celts running through the streets. The Celts enter the Forum and stop in speechless silence. Seated around the Forum, still, like statues, are the elderly members of the Roman Senate. The Celts are astonished at the sight, and can’t quite fathom what’s going on. Are these statues made of flesh or marble? Cautiously, one Celt pulls the beard of a silent, seated Senator. The elderly man promptly slaps the Celt in the face, breaking the atmosphere of awe and silence. A Senatorial slaughter ensues.

The first two definitions of the word “surrender” in the Webster’s New World College Dictionary are as follows. For the purposes of this article, please note the second half of each definition:

1. to give up possession of, or power over; yield to another on demand or compulsion.
- 2, to give up claim to; give over or yield, especially voluntarily, as in favor of another.

The first definition sure seems to fit the images of the defeated warriors in the first paragraph above. “Giving up” and “despair” are two words that come to mind.

But how about those Roman Senators? Sure, they knew they were going to die when they took their seats in the Forum that day. There wasn’t room for everyone on the Capitoline Hill to take refuge behind the walls. But those

Senators hadn’t “given up”. Nor were they in “despair”. They were defiant to the end, knowing that their deaths were unavoidable but also that they were enabling others to live. And yes, they surrendered, but not to the Celts! They had surrendered to the Gods and to their duty and honor.

But what can the last moments of a bunch of courageous old men 2400 years ago teach us today? In our busy lives, with all the marvelous, modern conveniences we have around us, what use is surrender?

I have a dear friend who used to drink far too much. For years he could keep his alcohol intake down to two or three drinks per day, but when his relationship broke up he went into a tailspin. He would party and drink and take drugs with young people half his age, buying them whatever they wanted. At that rate he probably had a year or two left before disaster.

I have another wonderful friend who is kindhearted and generous and full of life. She also felt that she wasn’t even remotely spiritual. While she understood that others claimed to have spiritual lives, she knew that spirituality wasn’t for her, and doubted if spirituality actually existed at all.

In my own case, I was in the 20th year of what had been a productive relationship but now was filled with emptiness. I had spent much of my life doing what I thought others expected of me, living other people’s versions of my life. Living in England those last few years, I had joined in with village activities, directing the village play every year and I even joined the local church, singing in the choir (which I loved), though I had no connection to the religion at all. I kept going by keeping up appearances, and was filled with quiet desperation. To split up with my partner was unthinkable – what would I do? Where would I go? How would I cope?

In each case, we were lucky enough to ask ourselves one question:

“Am I willing?”

Not, “Am I willing to do this,” or “Am I willing to do that.” But just, “Am I willing?” By responding in the affirmative, we opened ourselves up to the Gods and the Powers and allowed ourselves to go with the flow of the Universe.

The first friend hit rock bottom, and was finally willing to change his life. Though an ex-Roman Catholic Priest, he had no spiritual life and wasn't too sure about this “higher power” stuff that his 12-step program insisted he rely upon. But he accepted that he couldn't “fix it” by himself and finally just surrendered. He surrendered to his higher powers and finally let go. He's been sober for two years, now.

My second friend was asked, “Are you willing?” by someone who was mentoring her. My friend, playing along, finally agreed and said that she was willing. Some little time later, she found herself in a situation where she felt abandoned by her mentor. When she found him, she sputtered and raged with white-hot anger. Suddenly, the rage simply evaporated. She gazed at her mentor in open-mouthed surprise. She understood. Her anger at being abandoned was not about her mentor. It was about her anger at the Gods for abandoning her. But what she had realized was that the Gods had not abandoned her, for they had always

been there. She had abandoned the Gods. At that moment she felt an intense spiritual connection with both the Powers and the world around her. She had surrendered to the truth.

I met someone who could fill the hole in my heart. And so I, too, let go. My ex and I sold everything, house and all, and split everything down the middle. Then I came back to America, giving up the life of a country squire, and moved into a doublewide for a year. Finally, we ended up in Tucson where I found the Gods, or should I say, they found me? I had opened my soul to the Universe and truly surrendered.

Surrender, in this context, is not passive. It is not about “giving up,” nor is it about defeat. And it definitely is not about taking the easy way out or only doing what we want to do. Surrender is a very powerful act. It is about choosing to open ourselves up to the power of the Kindreds. This allows our souls to flow with the natural direction of the Universe and lets the Gods touch our hearts.

Strengthened by meditation and my personal hearth practice, I am making my life one of service and one of willingness.

So, are *you* willing?



ADF Liturgists' Guild

We are proud to announce that part of our study program is now up and accepting students! Please come join us to talk about rituals and liturgies.

The Liturgists' Guild promotes the art and science of liturgy within the context of Our Druidry by providing a framework for the study of ritual structures and their cultural contexts, both ancient and modern, and encouraging the adaptation and synthesis of that material for the enrichment of ADF rituals and lore.

Membership in the Liturgists' Guild is open to all members of ADF. Anyone who is interested in becoming a member of the Guild should contact the Guild Scribe to be placed on the membership list.

You can find out more about us at the following web site:

<http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/liturgists/>

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Placing the Home Shrine

by Michael J Dangler

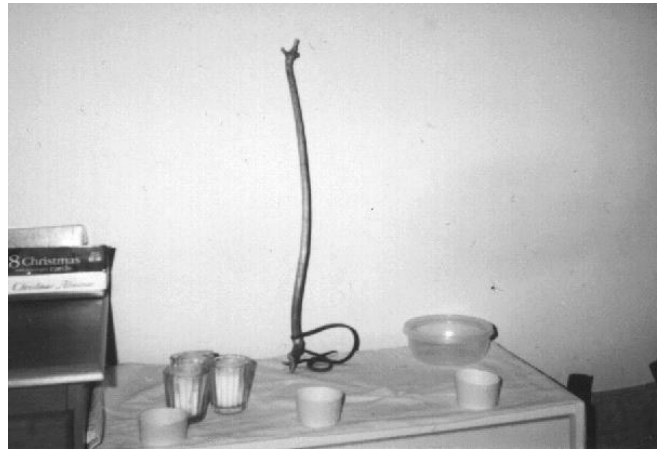
The Home Shrine requirement in the Dedicant Program was one of my favourite to finish (and even now it is a growing, evolving process), but I realised recently that there are some things that are not addressed. One of the most obvious things left hanging is where to put the darn thing.

The placement of the Home Shrine is entirely up to you, and should be a personal choice. Of course, I could say that until I'm blue in the face, and you'll be right back in the same place you were before. Instead, I'll give you my own theory on what to do with it.

A good home shrine is, ideally, at the center of your living space, which places it at the center of your life. That's not feasible for everyone, and in fact mine is in my bedroom, which is certainly not the center of my life or living space. I put it there, though, because my girlfriend, who also lives in my house, does not share my religion, and placing it in the center of our living space would feel (to me, not necessarily to her) as if I'd imposed my religion on our relationship.

A lot of the idea behind placing it out in a main portion of the house also comes from the fact that, as this is the Dedicant Program, we're committing to a life-long dedication to the worship of our gods, and to the Elder Ways. Part of that is not hiding who we are, and we shouldn't be embarrassed. When I give tours of my house (takes all of three minutes, but still. . .), the altar in my bedroom is one of the main features I point out.

As I was typing this, I began to thinking about placing a Home Shrine in its own special, magical room, and what that symbolized. It kind of seems to me that by placing it back in such a room, we're saying, "My religion isn't something I do all the time. It's something that I set aside 'special' time for, something that I haven't found a way to inte-



The author's evolving altar: three bowls and a stick.

grate into my whole life yet." Granted, I wouldn't suggest that that's what people are thinking when they put their altar in that room; they're actually probably thinking that they're helping maintain its sacredness by cutting it off from the profane world that the rest of the house is. There's nothing wrong with that.

Still, in the end, it seems to me that if we separate the Shrine out spatially from the places where we live our lives, we are also removing it from the lives that we lead. I do think that if the worship is to be central to the life of those who live in the house, it should also be central to the home. We aren't pious people every other Thursday, and we don't separate ourselves from our Gods, so why should we move the center of our daily worship to a place where it will be both out of sight, and (by extension) out of mind?



The author's evolving altar: the first permanent steps.

But, of course, as I said above, different living situations will require different things. There's nothing wrong with keeping your Home Shrine in a different room, or in a room you rarely use. Keeping it in your bedroom actually has a lot of positive aspects: it becomes the first thing you see in the morning, and the last thing you see at night. Combined with devotionals, this serves to keep me ever mindful of the deities.

Keeping your Shrine in your kitchen is another excellent option, especially for a stay-at-home parent. For a lot of stay-at-home mothers and fathers, much of their time is spent in front of the modern hearth (the stove) fixing Mac 'n' Cheese for the kids, and thus the kitchen becomes the center of their lives. It makes sense, then, to keep the Shrine here, and thus keep piety at the center, as well.

Another great idea, moving along the same current as trying to keep your Shrine in the center of your life, is to have satellite altars placed around your house. I've even branched out into having a small one in my office since I do so much work there. It's not very visible to my co-workers, but it's there to remind me that piety doesn't get left at home.

The direction your altar faces is up to you. If you're used to your altar facing north, then aim it north . . . If east is



The author's evolving altar: first altar in the new house.

more your game so you can watch the sunrise, then set it up that way. In the end, the Home Shrine is designed to be a personal expression of your worship, and really, any altar is.

No matter what, your altar will be an expression of your personality. It's very important that you do what you want with it, and that it be in the place that is most comfortable to you. For me, that means making it central; for you, there might not be the same connotations of "locality of your Shrine = locality of gods in your life". Put it where it feels right to you, and where it says what you want it to say.



The altar as it currently stands.

Hellenic Religion

by Hekataia (Rev. Venus Clark)

The primary concerns of ancient Hellenic religion were piety, maintaining a positive relationship between human and deities, and reinforcement of social bonds.

Ancient Hellenes interacted with the Gods in a reciprocal relationship built upon acts of piety in exchange for divine goodwill. To be pious was to pray and sacrifice to the Gods. Sacrifices were gifts given to the Gods and were made by both individuals and communities (Burkert pg. 66). Burkert says the act of sacrifice “creates a relationship between the sacrificer and the God” (Burkert, pg. 57).

Some of the most common requests made to the Gods were overall good health in the forms of strength, avoiding illness, and cure from illness, prosperity, achieving or maintaining high status, justice, and protection (Mikalson pg. 22-25).

Relationships with the Gods were sought by more than individuals and smaller communities, they were also pursued on the larger state level. Cities sponsored a variety of festivals for the Gods and generally sought divine favor in areas including agricultural prosperity and aid in battle (Mikalson pg. 18-22). Religious duties were sometimes a required part of political offices, such as the Archon of Athens (Atkins & Atkins, pg. 35).

In exchange for their pious acts, ancient Hellenes hoped to receive the goodwill of the Gods. According to Mikalson, divine goodwill gave “good fortune, prosperity, and good hopes for the future” (Mikalson pg. 18). However, the Gods do not intervene in human affairs in an omnipotent manner, but instead provide positive opportunities for humans to act upon (Mikalson pg. 60, 62).

Ancient Hellenic religion provided frequent opportunity for the community to gather together at festivals and

other sacrifices. The act of communal ritual binds the individuals into a whole unit reinforcing social bonds of the group, even in some cases on the larger state level. The formation of these bonds is especially prominent in certain types of rituals, like animal sacrifice, in which the entire community shared the act of killing another animal for their own survival (Burkert pg. 53-55). Some larger state festivals also included the means of bringing people together in a communal identity, such as the Anthesteria in Athens (Burkert pg. 241).



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Answering the Call of the Wild: Festivals and Gatherings

by -Michael J Dangler

Twelve hours ago you were sitting in your office watching the clock tick slowly by. Five hours ago you were driving through another state to get to your destination. Three hours ago you were pulling up the gravel path to the registration tent. Two hours ago you met someone for the first time whose name you knew from an email list and whose posts you admired. An hour ago you sat down with your new friend by the fire and listened to the storytellers tell stories and watched the dancers dance. Now, there are drummers and singers and dancers.

The drums and the fire and the laughter and the dancing and the mead and the songs and the joy and the smiles...

And it hits you: this is what “fellowship” means in “A Druid Fellowship”. The festivals are where it’s all happening, face to face, mixing ideas we’ve only just begun to ferment. The festivals are where we finally meet those members that we’ve been watching on the email lists, and where those of us who talk too much get in touch with those who never talk enough.

It has been interesting to me, over my past four years in ADF, to go to the various festivals put on by ADF Groves and individuals. Sitting around the fire on a chilly night at Trillium, listening to Bard Dafydd read a poem; mastering shadow puppets to the delight of a small crowd at Walking With Fire; or relaxing in a hot tub for four straight hours at Desert Magic: these are the things I remember best, and each festival has new memories and new friends to add to the growing list.

The ideas that bring new life into Our Druidry also get their test runs at the festivals. At Desert Magic in 2004, I saw John Michael Greer describe how ADF could create its own magical system. At Wellspring 2004, I heard Ian Corrigan present his thoughts on the ADF Initiate Program. At Wellspring 2003, I heard the presentation of the idea of Kins, and at Summerland in 2002, I saw the workshop that would later become my essay “Three Bowls and a Stick” that now appears in the Dedicant Pro-



A booth at Summerland 2003.

gram Handbook.

If you’ve read my reviews of festivals for the past few issues of *Oak Leaves*, you’ll note that I always talk about the virtue of hospitality, and I have a tendency to praise each host. Part of this is that these hosts have really, truly been that good: each festival, from Desert Magic to Summerland to Walking With Fire, the hospitality shown by the organizers (and even the attendees!) was simply amazing. The organizers were helpful and genuinely cared about their guests, and the guests did their best to take some of the burden off the organizers where they could.

Always, though, the thing that astounds me most is the closeness of the community at ADF festivals. I was amazed when, at my very first festival when I’d been a member for about 4 months, I was able to walk right up to the Archdruid, sit down next to him, and ruthlessly question him about the Two Powers requirement in the DP. Over the years since then, at all the festivals I’ve attended, I’ve noticed that I can do the same with any ADF member. I love to sit down with new faces over a mead horn or in front of the fire and just talk. In the end, it’s the conversations outside the dining hall at Summerland or the late night I stayed up with Narabali and Ratrija at Walking With Fire that I remember best, the one-on-one time with other members that keeps me coming back for more.



Rev. Skip Ellison, ADF's Archdruid, during the Buffett Ritual. Summerland 2003.

There are so many festivals that I still want to go to sometime: Muin Mound Madness, Fall Fest, and Three Realms are just a few of them. Work and life don't always let us do everything we want, though, so it might be a while before I make the full circuit. But I am intent on trying. There's so much of ADF left to meet and be a part of!

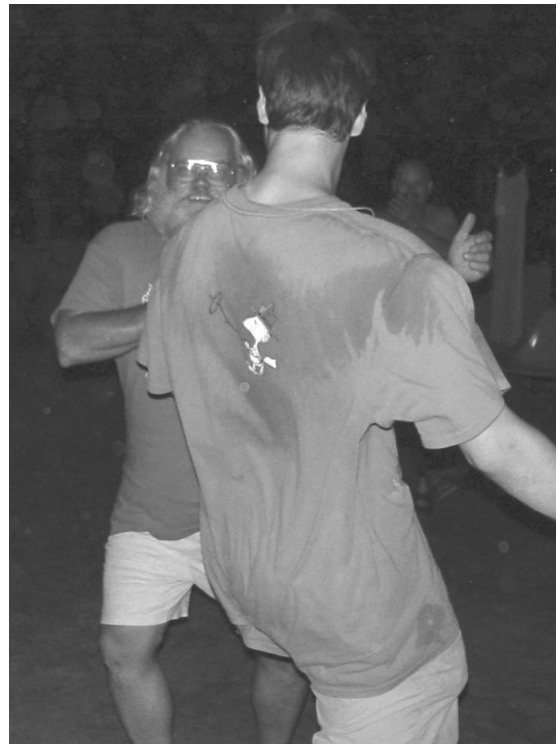
In the end, I suppose what I really want is to encourage every ADF member, no matter how long you've been a part of the organization, to get out and go to the festivals. If you're new or feel disconnected from the organization, or if you're an involuntary solitary just looking for some physical connection with people of a like mind, festivals can rekindle an excitement and vigor to your practice you might not have known you had. If you're a longtime member who just wants to reconnect, getting together with other ADF members can remind you why you're with the organization in the first place.

Festivals can be a wonderful experience. But you have to go to them to get that experience!

You can find a full listing of ADF festivals on the ADF site, linked from

<http://www.adf.org/core/events.html>

If there's a festival near you, especially one less than two or three hours away, I very much encourage you to go. I can promise you that you won't be disappointed. Plan ahead, stay warm (and stay dry!), and hopefully we'll see a review from your next festival in the next issue of Oak Leaves!



Rev. Skip Ellison, ADF's Archdruid, and Michael J Dangler, Dance Guild Scribe, dancing at Summerland 2003.



Michael J Dangler at the Buffett Ritual. Summerland 2003.



The Triple Goddess of the Celts: Combating a Misconception

by Mary Jones

There are a number of common Neopagan misconceptions regarding the Celtic gods, and the most prominent one is that of the Triple Goddess. To be sure, there are triplets of goddesses in Celtic myth, particularly in Ireland. There are even triplets of gods, in fact. But the fallacy is that these triplets are in the form of “maiden, mother, crone”, conceived by Robert Graves in his book *The White Goddess* and popularized with the neopagan movement. In fact, it is not only goddesses which come in triplet form, but gods also. This is not unusual--the Celts had an affinity for the number three, witnessed over and over again in their literature and their religion.

My quarrel isn't with whether or not a “maiden-mother-crone” system is a valid theology; no, my argument is with the idea that it is authentically Celtic.

The earliest example of the Triple Goddess is in the figure of The Mothers--Matronae--found in inscriptions on the continent, dating from the first centuries of the Common Era. Usually, the reliefs depict three well-attired women, holding flowers, fruit, wheat, and so on. Sometimes they were depicted as married, otherwise as not (noted by a lack of bonnets, apparently). Often, secondary names--likely that of local land or river goddess--are given along with the title of “Matronae”. It is important to note, however, that there is a lack of uniformity to this depiction--that is, the figures do not fit a “maiden-mother-crone” pattern. Sometimes there is a mix of married and unmarried figures, sometimes it is entirely married women, etc.

The most famous of the Triple Goddesses is Brigit, the daughter of the Dagda, often called “the poetess.” Her worship was widespread, probably through the semi-dominance of the Brigantes tribe, who covered a wide area from Ireland into Gaul. According to Cormac's Glossary, there were three of Brigit, all sisters--Brigit the Poetess, Brigit the Smith and Brigit the Doctor--patrons of their respective skills.¹ However, we are not told that they are a maiden-mother-crone; they are all the same age. Instead,

her multiplicity implies that she is a master of many arts, and like the Matronae, was patron of the tribe.

Which brings us to our first masculine example: Lugh Lamhfhada, the Samildánach--master of all arts. Like Brigit, his worship was widespread, attested to by inscriptions and the belief that the numerous towns that bear the name Lugodunum (or some variation) refer to Lugos. Some of these inscriptions refer not to Lugh (or his Gallic form Lugos) but to a Lugoues--a multiplicity of Lugos. There are some references in Irish literature to the belief that Lugh was the lone survivor of triplets; we see a similar situation with the Welsh equivalent Lleu (though here he is the survivor of twins). Again, it is important to notice that Lugh appears in a triplet form, as a symbol of power and mastery of all arts.

The third triplet is, oddly enough, someone once thought historical: Queen Guenevere, wife of Arthur. According to the Welsh triads:

The Three Great Queens of Arthur: Gwenhwyfar daughter of Cywryd Gwent, and Gwenhwyfar daughter of Gwythyr son of Greidiawl, and Gwenhwyfar daughter of Gogfran the Giant.

And so we have three sisters again. This is significant, for it leads us to the next version of triplets: the goddess of the land. The triplets in these cases do not have the same names but are three sisters, such as Eriu, Banba, and Fotla, the daughters of Ernmas--three names for Ireland, married to the three kings of Ireland, the brothers Mac Cuill, Mac Cecht, and Mac Grienne, all grandsons of the Dagda, and a male triplet. Then there are Eriu, Banba and Fotla's sisters, the war goddesses Morrigan (sometimes called Anand or Anu), Badb, and Macha, who again represent the sovereignty of Ireland. They are not of three different stages, but seem close in age; these triplet sisters are somewhat recalled in the three sisters of Arthur, Morgan le Fay,

Morgause, and Elaine.

And there are other male triplets:

- * Brian, Iuchar, and Iucharba, the sons of Turenn
- * Cian, Cu, and Cethe, the sons of Cainte
- * Bleiddwn, Hydwn, and Hychdwn the Tall, the (unconventionally produced) sons of Gilfaethwy and Gwydion, from Welsh mythology.

What is seen is that the reason so many gods and goddesses in the various Celtic pantheons exist as triplets is due to an affinity with the number three, as well as possibly the representation of a multi-faceted deity as being a master of all arts—and perhaps representing the levels of Indo-European society.

Finally, the idea of Trinity--Christian, Hindu or otherwise--is not derived from the Triple Goddess. As I and others have shown, the idea of triplet deities is not limited to one sex. It's prominence is likely twofold: first, if Dumézil's theory of Indo-European tripartition is correct, than the triplet nature of these gods and goddesses may represent that system. Secondly, I've read that the number three is simply the highest number grouping, the highest pattern, that the mind will accept before dividing objects into a new group. We don't usually see quadruple gods because our mind divides the number four into two groups of two. Five is divided into groups of three and two, six into three and three (or two, two, and two), etc. The preponderance of the number 3 is found not only in religion or literature, but is everywhere.



¹ As such, Brigit is then representative of the three classes in Indo-European society: as a poet, she represents the religious class; as a smith, she represents the warrior class; and as a leech, she represents the producing class, or so I have been told.



Attention all Artists! **ADF has issued you a Challenge!**



Within each issue we will send out a word, an idea, a vision for you to explore through photography, sculpture, poetry, jewelry, song, wood carving, fabric or any artistic medium that you can come up with! Challenges will appear within the pages of Oak Leaves. You will have three months to complete each challenge.

Send in a text document, a scan or a photograph of your work to the Oak Leaves Art Director at Vedis_jansdottir@mchsi.com. Please include your name, e-mail address, dimensions of the piece, title, media, and your web site if you have one.

Submissions will be judged by the Oak Leaves Staff based on each submission's relativity to the Challenge, artistic merit, appropriateness for print in a publication, cultural accuracy, and creativity. One First Prize and two Honourable Mentions will be selected. The First Prize recipient will be featured in a future issue of Oak Leaves in an article showcasing them and their art. Honourable Mentions will have their work shown in a future issue of Oak Leaves.

**The Current Challenge Is:
The Ancestors and Death**

**The Challenge Deadline Is:
July 1st, 2005**

The Challenge is open to all. You do not need to be a member of a Guild or ADF to enter your submission. One submission per individual please.



A Druid Speaks

Interviewing ADF Members

Monika L. Butke is a member of the Grove of the Other Gods and a fiddle player. Monika can be reached at: monikabutke@gmail.com

Oak Leaves: How did you come to polytheism?

Monika: Funny enough, I had an excess amount of money to spend (from a larger-than-normal loan check from school) and went to Amazon.com to search for books. On my recommended page, I was given a few titles on mysticism and the occult. I began clicking, and clicking, and clicking, until finally I ended up on someone's paganism reading list. I read a few reviews, and ordered a few books, and began an in-depth study into what was originally a passing interest.

OL: When did you first discover ADF?

After meeting Mike Dangler at Ohio State University's Pagan Student Association [PSA], he invited me (along with the rest of the group) to the 6th Night Grove, ADF Imbolc 2002 ritual. I wasn't really too concerned with what it would entail...in fact, I was under the belief that it would mostly be a party (much like the PSA meetings I had already attended). I was pleasantly surprised once I realized that ADF was a structured (but not too structured!) religious organization.

OL: What was your first ADF ritual like for you?

That ritual (Imbolc 2002 with 6th Night) was the first pagan ritual I had ever attended, as well as my first ADF ritual. It was mind-blowing, to put it succinctly. I remember waking up and not quite wanting to make the trip from OSU to Dayton and back. But, I got a burst of energy and showered and met everyone to make the trip down there. Sadly, I don't remember the structure of the ritual (although I am sure it followed ADF liturgy) but I do remember certain powerful moments.

As the Senior druid lead us in a meditation to connect us with the earth, he told us of roots springing from our feet into the earth and into the bright center. As I was barefoot, I felt an immediate connection as I listened to his words. I felt as though the bright, white, magma-hot center of the earth was the place where all energy was formed, reshaped, and taken for use in other matters. I felt

the energy rise through my "roots" and rise through my body, as floodwaters rise. I felt like a sturdy tree trunk, and I knew that I would not drown in this energy. As the meditation went on, I began to get intense hot flashes: I was breaking out in cold sweats and I had a hard time breathing. I was extremely dizzy, and I wanted to let go of those who held my hands.

My mind raced with many thoughts, but one poetic idea kept coming back to me: This white-hot energy that was ravaging my body and making me feel out of control was actually burning away my past uncertainties. It was burning away the "old" me, and preparing me for a journey of scholarship and knowledge of the pagan ways. Wow.

After the ritual, I had a hard time calming down. I was so full of energy, that I felt like a kid who had too much sugar. I was bouncing off the walls, and eating everything in sight! I was quickly taught how to ground, and tried to come to some sort of realization of what I thought had happened.

The rest of the week, I was thoughtful. I couldn't explain the crazy thoughts racing through my head, or the adrenaline rush I got every time I remembered the meditation. That was the first "sign" I feel I got from the "folks around me" that I was embarking on an interesting adventure of self-discovery.

OL: What is it that you do in ADF?

Currently, I am working on the Dedicant's Program and I am an active member with Grove of the Other Gods, ADF in New Brunswick, NJ.

OL: Many people experience ADF mostly through the various mailing lists and Oak Leaves. Do you think that ADF's Internet presence gives a clear picture of what the ADF community is?

I do not think that ADF's internet presence is representative of the community as a whole. The rare feelings of camaraderie and joy inherent in group rituals, picnics, and outings are sometimes missing throughout the Web. Additionally, I have learned about the more mystical side of Druidry and Paganism through hands-on learning with others. Although I believe that solitary practitioners can

learn and grow a great deal through ADF, for me, a “beginner-to-intermediate” pagan, I am ever thankful for the understanding I receive from others in person. I appreciate ADF’s many scholarly listservs and poignant articles in *Oak Leaves*, but I feel that without some sort of interpersonal activity, an important aspect of this religion is lost.

OL: What would you advise people to do in order to see the ADF community in action?

The easiest thing to do would be to find a local grove. Understandably, not all areas are blessed with one (or two, or three).

For example, I was able to participate in rituals with Three Cranes Grove, ADF in Columbus, Ohio. After moving to New York City last August, I was left without a grove. After much research, I found Grove of the Other Gods, ADF, located in New Brunswick, NJ. Sadly, a trip out there takes over 2 1/2 hours (by subway and by railroad), but for me, I feel that it is warranted.

In addition to attending a ritual with a grove, I would suggest reading ADF’s website. It is very informative and thorough, and can somewhat approximate the wondrously varied personalities found within this community.

OL: What do you see as your greatest accomplishment, thus far, as a member of ADF?

Before joining this organization (and even now), I’ve always had an extremely hard time with meditation and trance work. What thoughts are popping in my head? Am I putting them there, or is “someone else?” How do I interpret my daydreams? Did I do my meditation “right?” Because of the intense focus on scholarly research, I now have a sort of eclectic mythological foundation on which to compare my experiences. I have also learned that if I continually question the sacredness of what I think about during a meditation/trance, I know that some gods will try to contact me in more concrete ways.

OL: How do you balance your religion with the rest of the pieces of your life?

This is an extremely hard question, as I haven’t quite figured out how to balance everything yet. When I wake up, I try to light a candle and some incense and say a big “Thank you” to the powers that help me out and teach me things. Throughout the day, if I notice something in nature or at work that reminds me of a particular god/dess, I

think, “aha!” in acknowledgment. At the end of the night, if I’m not too exhausted, I say a quick thank you to each god/dess, ancestor, and “power” before I go to sleep.

While most of these “thank-yous” are short and sweet, I feel that they work for my personality and lifestyle. I have tried to conduct full daily rituals, and have overly-stressed concerning whether or not I am doing enough, but I am comfortable in the knowledge that what I feel I am doing now works.

OL: How do you communicate with the gods?

Until I constructed my home shrine for the Dedicant’s Program, I used to either talk out loud or in my head to those that I currently worship. Now, I am able to stand at my shrine and feel as though I have stepped into a sacred space to talk to the gods (still out loud or in my head).

OL: Sometimes the gods can leave us confusing messages, what are your suggestions for figuring things out?

Oh man, I am the last person who should be answering this question! I have a pretty hard time with figuring out what the gods want me to do: in fact, I request that they hit me over the head with information if something is needed from me! Recently, I have started pulling daily tarot card lessons, along with a rune to clarify the message. Not only does this help me to learn the different forms of divination, but if the two omens compliment each other, I feel as if I have an idea of what is needed from me. When they don’t, well, then I usually just say, “huh?” and hope that it makes more sense by the end of the day.

OL: What is your fondest memory of an ADF event?

For Imbolc 2004 with Grove of the Other Gods, ADF, I played my violin as entrance music and as an offering to Brighd. The summer before, I had visited Ireland and attended traditional Irish fiddle classes, and I was able to add an Irish flair to the ritual. When my turn came to offer my praise to Brighd, I played my favorite jig with such energy and quickness that I was sure she was teasing my poor fingers to play faster! I laughed out loud and carried that ecstatic energy with me for a few days after.

OL: What is your most powerful religious/spiritual experience?

It was on February 7th, 2003. It was an Imbolc ritual

with a Faery Witchcraft Coven. Here are my notes from my journal for that night:

Wow, what a night. Even though there were many chaotic events surrounding this evening's ritual, it actually was really intense and amazing. I was told that I would be (most likely) invoking Brighd, and so I showered and began reading every article/book chapter I had on her. Our group did loads of energy/power/spell-work, but the most eventful part of the evening came when I tried to invoke Brighd. Earlier, I had made a simple prayer asking for courage and guidance when/if She came to me. Although I was slightly nervous, I felt I was ready to try.

As a friend spoke the spell of protection and began the chant, I tried to clear my mind and make myself a willing vessel. As the chanting grew to an ecstatic fever pitch and the energy really started flowing, I began to feel very warm and kind of tingly and light-headed ("ecstatic", I guess). I was unsure of what was going to happen or what/how I was going to feel.

When the time felt right, I thought I could almost feel Her. I kept waiting and waiting for something; I don't know what exactly. I tried to speak; to mention to everyone else that perhaps I wasn't ready for this. I felt really dizzy and surreal and just plain WEIRD. A slight weight that I had not known about "shifted" as I realized in my heart that she wasn't going to possess me.

A friend told me to lay down. I did, unsure of what was going on in the ritual. As I lay, I kept breathing slowly; feeling let down and disappointed with myself for what happened (or didn't). (I did not know it yet, but my friend actually took on Brighd instead.) I kept wondering if I should stay lying down; maybe Brighd would come into me that way instead.

After a minute, I sat up and moved to lean against the wall. When I glanced at my friend; it hit my immediately that HE WAS BRIGHD.

I was stunned, overwhelmed, whoa; no words. Everyone began giving their offerings and Brighd/my friend accepted them with grace.

When Brighd/my friend looked to me, I stood shakily and offered my gifts of herbs (Irish Moss, Basil, and Bay Leaves) and told Her that I did not write wishes on the

Bay Laurel because She had already granted them a few days ago at the ADF Imbolc ritual I attended. When I said this, Brighd/my friend hugged me and whispered into my left ear (my good ear; the goddess knew!); "My madness would have overcome you. You weren't ready this time, but there will be another."

I became very emotional (manic, tearful, humbled, in awe, and others all at the same time) and very thankful and grateful. I also felt very small and weak in front of this great goddess.

When She sat after accepting our gifts, Brighd/my friend looked at each of us in turn; and it was a very clear, wise, and penetrating gaze. I was unable to look upon Her for quite a while. She then spoke of the infinite Love that the gods and goddesses had for us, and of the Love we should foster in each other. She also talked of the importance of peace in these times; that if we did not promote peace it would be our doom.

Then, Brighd/my friend asked if we had any questions for Her. I wasn't really "with it" enough to remember most of them, but as her wondrous gaze landed on me, my mind was ablaze with all kinds of thoughts and extreme shyness; She knew I had a question. I was a little confused; She knew what my question was before I did!

Finally, after much stuttering, I blurted out "Do I have strength?" She responded, "Yes you have much..." I became very emotional again (but tried to keep back the tears) and Brighd/my friend came over to me and gave me a hug and kissed my head. I slowly began to feel calm and "myself" again; and when Her gaze came upon my once more, I was able to look her in the eyes and slowly smile.

It was the most powerful and emotional experience in my life and I hope never to forget it (or Her words of wisdom).

OL: What pantheons do you work with?

Strangely enough, I haven't quite picked a specific pantheon yet. I have started relationships with different deities from different cultures, and I like the sort of jumbled-chaotic pantheon I have created for myself. However, I do think that I work with mostly Celtic and Norse deities; with some Vedic and non-IE gods thrown in the mix!

OL: Now that you have been to your first event/festival, what was it like?

My first event/festival was “Walking with Fire,” and it was the most interesting, hilarious, tiring, and information-packed weekend that I had the entire year! I arrived nervous and shy, and left with many new friends and memories. Throughout the weekend, I heard many stories from other members about past ADF events, and the problems of camping in wet/cold weather, so I was very pleased that my first event was in a climate-controlled vacation house with real beds! Because so few individuals participated in this event (approx. 10?), I was able to talk in-depth with many of them. I learned so much about different ways to practice religion, as well as how ADF is organized as an international church. Also, I appreciated having the Archdruid, Skip, in attendance. His lectures and insights helped me to find the motivation to participate more on the ADF lists and within my own grove. I would highly recommend attending any ADF event/festival, especially to new members and involuntary solitaries.

OL: Which holy days do you celebrate?

I try to celebrate all of them, especially as a requirement of the Dedicator’s program, but I find that the fire festivals are more special to me. Additionally, I also celebrate “holy days” of deceased relatives’ birthdays. This helps me to keep a connection with my Ancestors (a Kindred I often accidentally neglect).

OL: Which is your favourite holy day and why?

My favorite Holy day is Imbolc. After an amazing experience at my very first ADF ritual, Imbolc has held double meaning for me. On this Holy Day, I celebrate my ongoing relationship with Brigid, who helped get me on this wonderful path, and I celebrate my anniversary of committing to Paganism in general.

OL: I know that you play the fiddle, how did you get into that?

Although I am originally from Queens, NY, I did not have an interest in playing music until I moved to Ohio. For some reason, the opportunities were more plentiful in Mansfield than in Flushing! During my 4th or 5th grade year, I joined the school orchestra and began taking private violin lessons from a backyard neighbor. I continued all the way through middle school and high school, joining various semi-professional orchestras along the way. When I began working on my Bachelor’s of Music at Ashland University, I

realized that although I was working on Vocal Performance, I could not double major in Orchestral Performance. I ended up trying out for the Ashland Symphony orchestra, and was allowed to play in one professional performance. After that, I became sort of burned out on music, switched majors to Criminal Psychology, and only played the violin as a hobby.

In the summer of 2003, I was blessed with the opportunity to visit Ireland for three weeks and attend Scoil Acla, a traditional Irish music school. I was blown away by the soul of the music, and for the first time, I realized what it was to play music on an instrument and feel spiritually moved by it. My hobby was re-ignited, and I have since played both Irish and classical music regularly. Most recently, I was able to play in Grove of the Other Gods 2004 Imbolc ritual. I played an Irish air, and part of my offering was a much-loved jig to Brigid.

OL: What is your favourite piece of music to play?

Although it may sound cheesy, I really enjoy playing themes from the *Lord of the Rings* soundtrack. Most people recognize the theme from the *Two Towers* film, and I always try to play it with my sister (she plays the Irish harp). My favorite Irish tunes are *The Humours of Ennistymon* and *The Kind of the Pipers* (two 6/8 jigs). And finally, my favorite classical pieces are *Danse Macabre* and the theme from *Witches of Eastwick*.

OL: How do you think music interacts with ritual?

I think that music adds an additional level of personality to any ritual. I find that although well-spoken pieces of liturgy can help put individuals in ritual “head space,” a precisely chosen and well-timed piece of music can increase the meaning of ritual, and perhaps even “push” a practitioner into a full-blown spiritual experience.

The most memorable experience I have had with music in ritual is using a song as a praise offering. I played an Irish jig for Brigid; one that I had trouble playing (but it was my favorite, so I decided to play it anyway). I began the jig rather slow and controlled, but by the end of the piece, I was playing so fast, and with so much energy, that I had a hard time keeping my fingers on the strings! And as an added bonus, members of the ritual began to clap and stamp in time with the beat, moving me faster and faster. As the final notes were played, I think we all breathed in unison-- we were touched by the power of the offering. It was really fun, and really moving.





The Wandering Druid

ADF Members' Tales From the Road

Dipping the Brush for the First Time

By Narabali Agnaya

Mount Fuji is brushed up against the bright blue sky with shades of dirt and broad strokes of snow. Its proud form reaches up over dark mountains that float along the landscape of Japan. It becomes quite apparent, as our train glides alongside it, to see why Hokusai (a famous *ukiyo-e* painter) created the woodblock prints of *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji* and *One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji*.

On our fifth day in Japan we found ourselves on a fast moving train from Tokyo to Kyoto. Kyoto was the jewel of our trip, a destination I had dreamed of seeing since I was but a child.

Once the former capital of Japan, Kyoto was spared the bombing that had occurred elsewhere in Japan during World War II. This lack of destruction has left Kyoto with many buildings which stand in the dark woods that graced the streets hundreds of years ago.

This trip was to afford us with various treasures that few foreigners would even dream of: a Shinto wedding ceremony and a small party with some of the geisha from Kyoto. The former was a simple renewing of our vows in a religion whose beauty matches that of Japan. The latter is a childhood delight stemming back to the daydreams where I would wear a kimono and pour sake in the role of a geisha.

We were also to be graced with the time to find a small glimpse the often overlooked island of Shikoku, a location well known for its 88 temple pilgrimage set within paved highways and wild lands. The pilgrimage had become a passion for us and we decided earlier this year that we would be completing it during an additional trip to Japan this year. It is an oddity to be sure: completing a Buddhist pilgrimage when I am as far removed from Buddhism as one gets. Alas, passions often cannot be explained.

Bright Lights, Wooden Temples

When thinking of Japan, or at the very least the Japan I have come to know, one must think in surprises. Both Kyoto and Tokyo are dense concrete jungles splashed with neon hues. Taxis of various colours pass by sidewalks containing waves



Mount Fuji, or Fujisan as it is known in Japan, is a dormant volcano which is 3776 meters high. Mount Fuji last erupted in 1708. We were blessed with such a clear shot of this beautiful landmark because clouds often prevent viewing.

of Japanese business men in their Western-styled suits. Young women in their high-heeled shoes move in and out of the crowds past *pachinko* parlours that call to you with loud upbeat tunes and flashing red and blue lights.

Nestled between large modern walls of stone, metal and glass you find the sloping slate roofs of various temples and shrines. Their bright red lanterns hang in the entryway, swinging slightly to the beat of the city. Simple fountains (some of which contain elaborate metal dragons that watch over the process) stand at the entrance for you to cleanse with: first you dip the ladle in to gather water, then you pour water over your left hand, then right, then left. Then you cup water and place it in your mouth where you rinse and spit (all of this being done outside of the fountain). Bells of all sorts hang from the ceiling over offertorial boxes: ringing the bell “wakes” the God. Statuary sits surrounded in coin offerings, as people bow twice, clap and then bow again. It is a process the Gods have seen thousands of times before, yet I believe they find joy within it.

To fully see Kyoto one must take the time to examine the grains and hues from which it came. You must soak in the dark stains, you must learn to distinguish a sake bar from a kimono shop from the entryway banners, and you must be willing to take your time to wander the streets to find the tucked away treasures that lay hidden under the gaze of history. Walking down a street heavily laden with modern fixtures often reveals the soft wood underbelly of the past.



A worshipper prays before a statue at the Toji Temple in Kyoto.



A man selling a collection of kimonos and hapi coats during the flea market at Toji Temple in Kyoto. He has set up shop near one of the various fountains whose water is used to cleanse oneself before entering the temple.

In Kyoto we first stayed within a former sake brewery. The cottage was most definitely in a Japanese style with *tatami* mats marking the room size, a Japanese style bathroom which required a change of slippers and cleaning oneself with soap and water before entering the bath, and low entryways which had my husband’s six feet and four inch frame meeting the door frames in rather painful manners.

Our first full day in Kyoto we took the subway and then walked to Toji Temple. On the 21st of each month a flea market is held and I was quite interested in purchasing as

many kimonos as I could get my husband to carry. The street on the side of the temple was packed with people and occasionally the face of a tourist peeked out from the Kyoto locals. As we neared the temple entrance the sidewalks became crowded with various stalls selling everything from cobs of corn on sticks, to antique pottery, to fresh fish, to clothing items.

The stalls trailed up to the entrance and snuck in past a lone priest who stood outside the large wood doorway chanting. The wares crawled up through the gate of the temple and then spilled out on to the temple grounds, engulfing every piece of free space. There were stalls selling nuts, stalls selling fish, stalls selling gems, stalls selling kimonos, stalls selling pottery, stalls selling knives, stalls selling jewelry, stalls selling antique wood statues over twelve feet tall, stalls selling... well, most anything imaginable that is Japanese!

We merely licked the surface when we realized we had to meet with Peter MacIntosh, an expert on geisha, in front of a *kabuki* theater. We were meeting as Peter has the ability to arrange parties with geisha.

He walked up from around the corner, his face beaming as he caught his breath. I find that though I make every effort to not judge anyone at a first meeting, I liked Peter instantly. His voice had remnants of a Canadian accent and had a deep passion laying within it. We made our introductions and he led us on our way through the geisha districts to a place he had picked out for lunch.



Three maiko and one geisha (second woman from the left) take a break from classes in one of Kyoto's many geisha districts.



A maiko walks towards a geisha (center) and another maiko (right). You can tell a geisha from a maiko by the manner in which they wear their kimono, their hair and their make-up.

The Slower And Willow World

Geisha are women who study various ancient Japanese art forms and use them to assist the comfort of guests at specific events. It is quite difficult to have an event and get geisha to attend, some would say it even borders on impossible. This is true for both foreigners and the Japanese.

Geisha, which literally means artist, study dance, singing, instruments, poetry, and various other art forms which they put to use by entertaining at private parties and public events. They also are expected to be graceful, polite, charming and true embodiments of etiquette and grace.

Geisha became popular because in ancient Japanese society the women stayed home yet their presence was often needed to keep an event alive. This is where the geisha became important. Geisha are entertainers and artists of the highest form. They entertain with their arts by telling stories, playing various instruments, dancing, singing and playing assorted games.

A geisha's day is full of classes to perfect their art. The evenings are usually spent at tea houses where they entertain clients; sex is not part of the entertainment. It is very difficult and expensive to have a geisha attend an event. Hiring up to three geisha for an evening can cost over 3000 US dollars. In addition in order to hire a geisha you must be well known by the tea house where the geisha live or you must be well connected and have proper introductions made by a respected geisha client.

There are several stages within the geisha life. The two most well known stages are that of the geisha and that of the maiko. Most Westerners do not know the term *maiko* but they do know the white face make-up, gorgeous hanging hair ornaments and crimsons lips of the maiko. When you find an image of a "geisha" it is often really a maiko. A maiko can be seen as the step just before becoming a geisha.

Most geisha try to have a patron who supports them financially. There is often a sexual relationship there, but not always. It is this patron (and the old custom of selling a maiko's virginity to the highest bidder) that makes people think that the geisha is involved in prostitution. But they are not prostitutes.

The geisha are expensive and are dying out. Girls do not want to become geisha and many only do so to find a wealthy husband. Others do not make it past the first year of training or they simply want the "hollywood high" (being a geisha you get on magazines, meet important people and are basically a celebrity).

There are various other craftsmen and women tied to them: make-up artists, wig makers, kimono creators, taxi drivers, and teachers. But the geisha are dying. With no new geisha to increase their numbers and a lack of interest from today's youth to pay them, they will no longer exist. If the geisha profession dies out so do the livelihoods of all the people who rely on them to purchase their goods and services. So too will the songs, dialects, and dances of the geisha eventual fall to history books.

In Kyoto there are a total of 250 geisha and maiko left. There are estimates that there are 10,000 geisha and maiko in all of Japan, this is compared with over 80,000 geisha and maiko in Japan during the 1920s.

Shintoism

Peter was also the individual responsible for putting together our Shinto ceremony. He purchased our kimonos and found us a nice Shinto temple and Shinto priests



Modern meets ancient: a street is lined with Japanese lanterns which lead into a Buddhist temple. This particular temple is located in a shopping mall in Kyoto.

to complete the ceremony. We were to be the first non-Japanese to be wed there. It was a great honour.

Even though we had been wed for three years, we wanted to renew our vows. It is said that a loss of a child can tear apart a marriage. After losing two in the womb we decided to strengthen our commitment to each other once again.

The ceremony itself would be a Shinto ceremony and spoken entirely in Japanese. Shintoism is a religion native to Japan which has no founder. It was based upon the practices and history of the people of Japan. It did not have a specific name until Buddhism and Confucianism came to Japan, after which it was named to distinguish it from the new practices. Shintoism has no holy text along the lines of the Bible in that it has religious text but they were created after the term Shintoism came into being. These texts are the *Yengishiki*, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*. The *Nihon Shoki* and *Kojiki* tell the history of Japan and Japanese mythology. The *Yengishiki* contains various codes of conduct, prayers and rituals.



This temple, located in Kyoto, is nestled between various modern shop fronts on a busy street. The rope hanging down in front of the temple is pulled to ring bells which “wake” the Gods inside.

The focus of the Shinto religion is that of the *kami*. *Kami* were seen as spirits or Gods that were forces of nature and the ancestors. *Kami* are usually split into three types: dead emperors and heroes, nature and human actions, and ancestors. One of the most popular *kami* is Amaterasu, a Sun Goddess. *Kami* are worshiped at Shinto shrines where one takes part in a ritual cleansing (the aforementioned washing of the hands and mouth), making an offering of food or money and then saying a prayer.

Shintoism was deeply effected by Buddhism. When Buddhism first came to Japan it was thought that the Buddha was another *kami*. Over time the *kami* began to be seen as manifestations of the Buddha. With the encompassing of Buddhism, Shintoism broke off into several different sects. Today there are said to be four main forms of Shintoism: Jinja (Shrine Shinto), Koshitsu (Shinto of the Imperial House), Folk (Observances and Rites of Passage) and Shuha (Sect Shinto). It is estimated that 100,000 shrines exist with 80,000 of them belonging to Association of Shrine Shinto.

Bathing Japanese Style

A few nights after staying in the old sake brewery we transferred over to a *ryokan* in the geisha district. A *ryokan* is a traditional Japanese inn. The rooms are done in true Japanese style and the price includes a breakfast and dinner. The dinner often far exceeds that served in any fine restaurant and is often served in your room. The *ryokan* which we chose to stay at was truly a beautiful place which entertained us with seven course dinners, fine *yukata* (a light kimono which used to be an under garment but is now worn within the home and at summer festivals), small gardens that were tucked around several corners, and an attention to detail that was truly phenomenal (in a bowl of miso soup we found small pink fans made of a bean curd, when in the soup the fan was open but when you lifted it from the soup it closed). As a further delight it was a former tea house where geisha did, and still do, entertain.

One of the more enjoyable things within Japan is the Japanese styled bathroom. I am not speaking of the electronic toilets which sing you songs, those which mask any embarrassing noises or those that make use of the bidet with temperature control. In Japan one has a bath that the entire family uses and there are many public baths which many people use (called an *onsen*). Most amazingly is that once the water is in the bath it is usually in for the day. This may sound odd, and perhaps a tad “dirty” to the Western mind but in fact it’s actually far cleaner than our way of taking a bath.

In the Japanese ritual of bathing the individual cleans before entering the bath. Sometimes a showerhead is available but mostly one uses a bucket full of warm water. You soap up and rinse off before entering the deliciously warm water of the bath where a nice soak seems to lift away all stress and soothe tired muscles. Compare this with the Western method of sitting in a tub of what is essentially dirty water and one wonders why we have not adopted a similar method! I find it is even more relaxing when the tub is made of wood and when the conversation is flowing freely. I hope to add a Japanese style bath to the temple we wish to construct (bathing being an important part of certain Vedic rituals).

Our days in Kyoto were spent stopping in at various antique shops, discovering temples and shrines hidden on the narrow streets, enjoying the modern and historic, and filling our suitcases with various purchases. With Peter we visited several sake breweries, a group of hillside temples which had a lovely view looking down at Kyoto, and a monument which contained the buried ears of Koreans that Japanese soldiers returned home with after a battle.

After enjoying the cuisine, people and slightly confusing subway system we found we were on our last day of our time in Kyoto. This was also the day in which we were to have our Shinto ceremony.

Daying Homage

In the shadow of this trip I found myself with a passage of life to write the ending to. I had experienced my second miscarriage in a row in just over twelve months time.



One of the arched entryways which lead into a the Chinatown of Yokohama. This Chinatown is said to be one of the largest in Japan.



A patron walks into a pachinko parlour in the technology district in Tokyo. Pachinko is a popular game which is played with small metal balls and resembles a type of vertical pinball. Players win the balls which they then trade in for prizes. Often these prizes are taken outside to another establishment where they are traded for money.



A stone sculpture of Buddha in the cemetery behind the Tokyo National Museum.



An incense offering at the Ryozenji Temple (The Temple of Vulture's Peak). Worshippers often burn incense or candles

While enduring this I was planning our trip to Japan. In doing so I found O-Jizo-san. O-Jizo-san is a member of the Japanese Buddhist pantheon. He is the patron of children, women and travelers. It is said he assists the souls of dead children in their task of building the pebble wall at the banks of the Sai-no-kawara (the river of the underworld). I had become determined to perform a ritual for my lost child, as I had done for the child before.

While in Tokyo I had started the process. We had found a temple standing near the Tokyo National Museum during our quest for a cemetery. We gave our donation, picked up a bundle of incense and after a short search for a lighter I lit it and placed it within the cauldron of many other sticks of lit dreams and hopes. I prayed then and I prayed again when we found O-Jizo-san in a small corner shrine by the temple's front gate. And I prayed again when we found O-Jizo-san in a small corner shrine by the temple's front gate.

I cannot say why I prayed to O-Jizo-san. After all, I do not believe in O-Jizo-san. I believe in my Gods and no others. Yet, it brought me comfort to do so. Some may say it proves that O-Jizo-san exists, while I would say no such thing.

88 Temple Pilgrimage

I continued my efforts for closure at the island of Shikoku where we stayed within Tokushima, the starting place of the 88 temple pilgrimage for many *henro* (pilgrim). The 88 temple pilgrimage is a Japanese Buddhist pilgrimage that has been occurring for over a thousand years. It honours Kobo Daishi (said to be the inventor of Japanese Buddhism, specifically Shingon) by visiting temples associated to him. The route is about 1000 miles (depending on your source) and is done clockwise to break free of the cycle of life and death (Shingon Buddhism believes that one may reach enlightenment in this life). You may also complete it counter-clockwise if you have committed a great error in life.

The 88 temples represent the false 88 karmas (not to be confused with *karman*) or temptations in life. There are additional temples apart from the 88 which it is also advised one visits and some end the pilgrimage by going to the mountain where Kobo Daishi was buried. To complete the temple one must technically walk 89 temple for you must return to the first temple as the pilgrimage is seen as a circle. The vast majority of the *henros* complete the pilgrimage in the spring, with another group completing it in autumn. Still others choose the

winter (although we saw no walking *henro* during our time at the temples).

At one point in time the trek was a long and arduous one, many *henro* did not survive the journey. Today thousands of people complete the pilgrimage, but most do it by bus or car (the trek by bus taking two weeks and by car taking on average seven days). There are a few people who do still walk it and it is said it takes between thirty and sixty days to complete the trek depending on your physical condition. You may also complete the pilgrimage via taxi, helicopter or by using the public transportation system (although the latter two require supplementing with walking or driving). Many people complete the pilgrimage for no religious reason and many people are not Buddhist.

A *henro* wears specific clothing consisting of many things including a white robe (tied right over left as this is how the dead were dressed), a walking stick (to represent Kobo Daishi), a Buddhist rosary and *ofsame-fuda* (small strips of paper which you leave at each temple and have your name and desire written on one side). Although, some individuals wear a simple white scarf and others nothing special at all.

I had first heard about the pilgrimage while researching things to see in Japan. It immediately caught my attention and I knew it was something that I needed to do. I am in no way a Buddhist and I find I agree more with a rival of Kobo Daishi. I do not believe in Nirvana, I do not believe in reincarnation, I do not believe in karma and I do not believe there is a cycle to break free from. But this is not a religious trek, at least not in the way it was intended.

Though I knew the result was the same regardless of the method of transportation I decided early on that I would walk it and in the end I would complete the pilgrimage a total of one hundred and seven times by way of the various methods available (walking, taxi, bus, helicopter). I also decided I would walk it counter clockwise the very first time.

I cannot precisely say why I have chosen to walk or to do so counter clockwise. It seems logical to me that if the original meanings were to walk counter clockwise to wipe the slate clean, so to speak, and to walk clockwise broke you from the cycle that one would start by walking counter clockwise and then continue the pilgrimage clockwise.



To the left of the Gokurakuji Temple (The Temple of Pure Land) there is a cemetery that clings to the hill side. While wandering through we found a barren path which seemed to lead no where. After walking upon its 45° incline, which weaved in and out of breathtaking views of the Shikoku country side, we were met with a flight of steep concrete steps. At the top of them was this simple, yet elegant, shrine.

I am quite sure I have done some shameful things in my life, just as I am sure rather shameful things have been done to me. I do not for a moment believe that walking this pilgrimage will wipe away anything I have done as I have no regrets in life, nor do I believe it will make me a better person than someone who has not completed a pilgrimage. I have completed four pilgrimages thus far: one to Canterbury, one to the Ganges, one to a temple which had an image of Agni and one to the grave site of an important man. I have learned immensely from all of them and through them I have found some piece of clarity.



This is the entry way of the Ryosenji Temple (The Temple of Vulture's Peak). This is both the first temple in the 88 temple pilgrimage. It is also the 89th, or last, temple as the pilgrimage is a circle and to complete it you must return to where you started from.

I do believe it will bring great growth. I do believe I will connect with my Gods in a manner not available to me before. I believe that walking for sixty days through an unknown wilderness will make me a better Brahmin and perhaps open my eyes to new possibilities and a simpler way of living. It will effect me deeply, not because I want it to but because that is the nature of a pilgrimage.



Ratrija reaches for a ladle at the Ryosenji Temple (The Temple of Vulture's Peak) on the island of Shikoku. The ladle is used to take water from the fountain to wash your hands and mouth.

I will walk the pilgrimage, but I will make them my own with my own Gods and my own way of walking. I am surrendering myself to the Gods.

Starting The Circle

While in Tokushima we took the train over to the first grouping of temples (some are relatively close while others are quite far apart). We walked from the station to the first temple (Ryosenji Temple: The Temple of Vulture's Peak) and then walked over to the second temple (Gokurakuji Temple: The Temple of Pure Land).



Living Our Druidry

Personal Experiences In The Practice Of Our Druidry

Finding Myself

by Moonhawk

I have been a solitary for about three and a half years now, and I'd like to share with you how I came to "be" a Druid.

It happened, finally, in May 2001. The process had started about 5 years before, but this was the culmination of that process. I had just found out that I was expecting a baby, just weeks after a miscarriage. At about five weeks, I was bleeding again, and the hospital was unable to get me in for an ultrasound for two days. Of course, if I were losing another one, there was nothing anyone could do anyway, so the ultrasound would just be for confirmation. I was understandably concerned having just lost a little one, and it was from this concern that my faith was born.

I prayed. I didn't have any specific Deity to pray too, but I knew that She was a Goddess. This was the first step of finding my new faith and myself, as the Christian faith I was raised with didn't allow for a female Deity.

I dreamed. In my dream, my grandmother, who had left us about a year previously, called me on the phone and congratulated me on the birth of my twin boys. It was comforting to speak to her, and I knew in my dream that she was dead and gone, but it seemed natural to me to be speaking to her and I was reassured by her words and her presence. This was the second step.

The ultrasound came, and it revealed a healthy, beating heart. I was relieved, to say the least, and I felt that my prayers had been answered. The bleeding was explained as the miscarriage of a twin, which immediately reminded me of my dream.

Each night, I prayed for a successful pregnancy to my nameless Goddess, and each day the baby grew inside of me. As my pregnancy progressed, I began to see things around me in a new light. Nature in all its splendour had new meanings for me. I began to notice things I had never seen before and I began to CARE a lot more about what was happening around me. My favourite times were those spent quietly in the garden, tending to my plants or just enjoying the breeze. This was the third step.

As I said, this process had begun a number of years earlier with some study and some exploring of my options, so to speak, but was I basically without a Faith. With the birth of my first child, a healthy son, things crystallized for me. I had gathered enough knowledge in my studies to connect-the-dots, so to speak. I had ancestors to guide me, a goddess to pray to and nature around me to enjoy and to learn from. These led me to one conclusion: Druid. And it felt RIGHT!!

From that time, nearly 3 years ago now, I have learned some more. I have realized that there is more than just "my Goddess". Others are there to help me as well. I have learned to listen for my ancestors, however they may choose to contact me. I have learned to appreciate nature in all its seasons. I still have a lot to learn on my journey to discover myself, but I have learned that this is what fits me. This is what calls to me. I have just recently joined ADF and I'm looking forward to broadening my horizons, learning as much as possible, and finding the name of my Goddess.

☪





Call Of The Oak

News, Resources & Rituals From ADF's International Community

Joining the International Community

by Narabali Agnaya

When one talks about ADF's international community they are often referring to those members who live outside of the United States of America. At times they seem to be a mythological bunch, but we know they exist.

As this year progresses I find that my family and I will be making the permanent leap from ADF's USA membership into the international community. We are packing up everything from Chicago and heading to our new home in Hollabrunn, Austria. German lessons are being taken, the school system is being researched and we are making every attempt to figure out what type of trash goes into what type of bin. In short, we look forward to this move (that we have been planning for five years) with excitement and wonder.

Yet, this move places us into the realm of the international. What ADF members are there? What are their interests? Are they close knit or scattered? Would they mind getting together? All of these questions, and more, I suppose, shall be answered within the coming years.

My husband and I hosted an event in 2004 that focused on the Eastern Indo-Europeans. Due to its success we decided that we would host it again this year. As we are moving it did not make any sense to come back to the United States to host it (after lugging all of the items we would need it just would not be worth it). We also thought it would be as good an excuse as any to try and bring an ADF event outside of the USA. Thus, we have decided to host it in our own home in Hollabrunn during November 22nd through the 27th, 2005.

Yes, this does make attending the event a tad more difficult for those in North America, but it is not impossible. More importantly is that this will bring an ADF event to Europe and allow the European members to gather together. It is an event which I hope will become an annual one.

While we are keeping our Eastern Indo-European focus we are flexible and hope eventually to cover topics that are of interest to all of ADF. I think that this event will be a wonderful opportunity to meet fellow ADF members and to gain a sense of community. In addition, as an honoured guest, the Archdruid of ADF Rev. Skip Ellision will be attending. He will be presenting a workshop and assisting with an ADF style ritual. This will prove to be a delightful chance to all interested to learn more about ADF.

The event is free to attend and you are more than welcome to stay with us in our home free of any charge. You need only worry about getting here and a few personal minor costs which are detailed on our web site at

<http://www.walkingwithfire.org>

I hope to see as many international ADF members as possible at this event. This event will provide a place to voice your concerns, questions and comments not just as an international ADF member but as an ADF member. I would like to take some time during the event to talk about the things we would like to see within ADF and the issues that are important to us.

I look forward to meeting as many people as possible as I make the journey into ADF's international community. It has been a joy living in the US and meeting so many wonderful ADF members. I think it will be an even greater joy in our new home as we come to know the international ADF community.



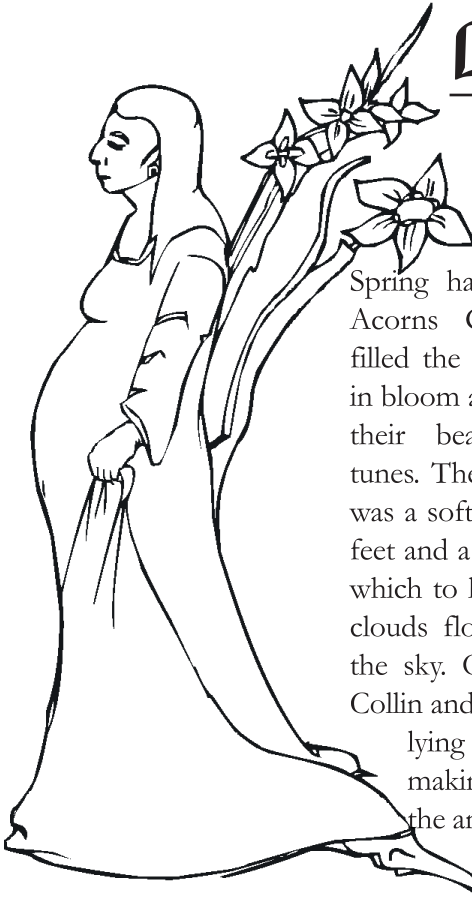
If you are a member of the ADF community outside of the United States please think of submitting your rituals, news, resources and events to Oak Leaves for use in Call of the Oak.

Little Acorns

Big Changes in Little Acorns Grove

by Natalie Erin Smith

aka. Lady DragonStar



Spring had come to Little Acorns Grove. Butterflies filled the air, the trees were in bloom and songbirds sang their beautiful springtime tunes. The new spring grass was a soft carpet under bare feet and a warm mattress on which to lay and gaze at the clouds floating lazily across the sky. On any other day, Collin and Aidan might be

lying on that mattress making up stories about the animals of the cloud kingdom above, but not today.

Mommy's belly had been growing throughout the fall and winter months. It was Aidan who first noticed it, shortly after the Samhain feast. "Daddy," he asked, "Did Mommy swallow a raw pumpkin seed?"

"Why do you ask, Aidan?" his daddy replied.

"Because it looks like she's got a pumpkin growing in her belly."

"No," laughed Daddy, "Your mommy has a baby growing in her tummy, just like you and Collin did. Mommy's tummy will get very big, and, come Springtime, you will have a little brother or sister."

"Oooh! Can we pick what we get?" asked Collin eagerly.

"No, boys, it's the Gods that decide that," replied their Dad.

Well, the pumpkin in Mommy's tummy had gotten much bigger, so big in fact, that it had gotten very hard for her to get around, and she didn't have much of a lap left for the boys to sit on. Then, this morning, when she was fixing

pancakes for breakfast, she suddenly bent over, like she was hurting, and said, "It's time, the baby's coming!" Daddy helped Mommy over to her chair and called Collin over.

"Collin," he said, "I need you to run to Mama Selu's house and get her to come right away. It's very important that you go straight there."

Aidan called out, "I want to go too, Daddy! Mama Selu always has the yummiest chocolate."

"This isn't a trip for sweets, Aidan. Besides I need you here for a very important job. I need you to help make sure Mommy's comfortable and has enough water to drink until Mama Selu gets here."

"Ok, Daddy!" Aidan said as Collin walked out the door.

Even though it wasn't long before Collin came back with Mama Selu, the village midwife, it seemed to take forever. At last, Mama Selu came in, a small woman with white hair and grey eyes, and the story of her long life etched in her beautiful face. Along with her came her daughter, Morgan, a mother herself and the seer of the grove. Morgan had come to help watch the boys, and to read the baby's omen after the birth.

"Come with me, boys," she said. "Come out into the grove, I have something to show you."

The boys followed Morgan out to the grove and she asked them to sit by the nearby stream. She picked an eddying spot in which the water swirled in a spiral before slipping beneath the surface to travel downstream. She invited the boys to gaze into the waters with her, and to get lost in its spiral.

"Notice how the spiral always changes, but yet stays the same," she said. "When water flows free, it cleans itself, stays always fresh and new. But when the water has no-

where to go, like down in Swamp Bottom, it gets dirty and stinky.

“Our lives are like that. The changes keep us fresh and strong. Changes help to keep our wits sharp and clean. Your lives are about to have a great change, boys. Change like a waterfall. That water’s not going to be the same as before it passed over the waterfall, but the falls are beautiful, even though they may be a bit scary. Collin’s seen this change before, when you were born, Aidan. Things are going to get a bit rocky for a while, like at the bottom of a waterfall, but the river will soon calm down, and your lives will be so much better that you won’t be able to imagine what it was like before the baby came, once every adjusts to the changes.”

“Wow!” said Aidan.

“When do you think the baby will be born?” asked Collin.

Just then, a faerie flew past them, headed in the direction of the meadow and their cottage beyond.

“Sooner than you think,” said Morgan, and she rose to her feet. “I think it’s time we headed back,” she said, slinging her crane bag over her shoulder. The boys rose and followed her back out of the forest.

As they were crossing the meadow headed towards the house, they heard a strange sound. It was a voice that they had never heard before. Indeed, it was the cry of a voice for the very first time on Earth. They ran up to the house and swung the door open. When they went to their parents, bedroom, they found Mama Selu, standing next to the bed where their mother lay, her hair matted with sweat and a big, tired smile on her face. Daddy was stand-



ing with his back to the door. When he heard Morgan and the boys come in, he turned around. In his arms was a tiny little bundle. All swaddled up inside was a brand new baby girl.

“Collin, Aidan,” their mother said, “meet Brigid, your baby sister.”





Poetry

Goddess

Beguiling voices fill my mind
 As I contemplate the moon
 And other womanly forces
 That whisper to me
 Of caverns and seas
 Of prettily glittering crystals
 Diffusing the light
 In a rainbow prism of color
 To spread over the earth
 In a sweet dream promise
 Of a better tomorrow.

I stand in the Shadow
 Of a towering oak tree
 And I feel the life stir within me
 Like the first tremor in the acorn
 As it begins to sprout
 Cracking open the hard outer shell
 To reveal tender shoots
 Reaching for the sun
 And craving roots
 Seeking sustenance
 From the soft, yielding earth.

I lift my hands high
 To the heavens
 And I feel myself become filled
 With the breath of tree and sky
 As I shine like a beacon
 On the top of a hill
 Lighting the way for others.

I bow my head in wonder,
 In the splendor and the awe
 Of such power
 As arises within me from the earth
 And pours down from above.

I am a chalice to be filled
 With the sweet, sweet nectar of the
 gods
 So that others may drink
 Of this divine wine
 And find their way Home.

By Linda Costello



Surtive Forest Floor

That illusive bond between memory and insight clings
 as tenuously as a winter tree's last leaf on an ice-
 laden bough.
 The exasperated sigh of a stark, creative winter
 impatiently coaxes the trembling leaf, inured to its
 fortune.
 It is woven, masterfully knitted into an earthy tapestry
 on the floor of the subconscious forest.
 Each crumbling leaf, brazenly iced with frozen frosting,
 trodden, and forgotten, reflects a solitary moment
 of a fleeting summer fully absorbed.
 Flagrant reds recall poolside daiquiris,
 yellows blush with a kitchen garden's warmth.

by Muirgheal

The savory fragrance of gingersnaps
 on a sauntering summer dusk
 seeps out of cinnamon and hazel foliage.
 All are present here, on this furtive forest floor,
 though some are summoned with more vitality than
 others.
 Each permeates and evaporates into the twilight of the
 year,
 perpetually nourishing the fertility of future forest
 growth,
 and their decay evokes the miraculous unfurling of
 an inspired soul.

Mother Earth's Lament

Mother earth just sits and weeps
The tears flow down like rain
She calls for help, but man just sleeps
Can't you feel her pain

Listen to the gentle breeze
It tells us what to do
Another ice age comes to freeze
We'll join the dinosaurs, too



The water was all wasted
The soil has grown tired
The pollution can be tasted
The air has all been fired

Trees are turned to paper
Paper turned to trash
Man becomes earth's raper
Soon we'll all be ash.

by Gary A. Carter

WALK WITH ME

Why do you approach with timid steps & bowed head?
You are not our servant, fear - do not show.
Let us show you the way,
To light the path on your own.

Walk tall with me that I may hold you,
I am the Mother, the Earth, the All.
You are my child - mine to protect.
Walk with me...

Walk strong with me that I may teach you,
I am the Father, the Light, the Sun.
You are my student - my light you shall see.
Walk with me...

Walk gaily with me that I may inspire you,
I am the Youth, the Will, the Wind.
You are my friend - together we're strong.
Walk with me...

Walk quietly with me that I may infuse you,
I am the Beauty, the Love, the Flower.
You are my sister - we embody love.
Walk with me...

Walk fast with me that I may strengthen you,
I am the Forge, the Craft, the Strength.
You are my project - my craft flows through you.
Walk with me...

Walk silent with me that I may show you,
I am the Dark, the Past, the Shadow.
You are my companion - I have the past you seek.
Walk with me...

Walk the sky with me that I may raise you,
I am the Moon, the Stars, the Night.
You are my shadow - my cauldron inspires.
Walk with me...

Walk nature with me that I may show you,
I am the Forest, the Animals, the Land.
You are my partner - my champion on Earth.
Walk with me...

Walk freely with me that I may refresh you,
I am the Water, the Fish, the Life.
You are my vessel - my waters to use.
Walk with me...

This path you follow is lit from within,
If you are timid, scared, the path will be dim.
Walk with strength, courage - eager to learn,
Walk WITH us and the path never ends.

by Monica Lake (aka Taryn/Seirian)

Ritualizing to the Beat of a Different Ant

(Sung to the tune of "The Ants Go Marching")
New words by Michael J Dangler

We went down to the Grove in June, hurrah, hurrah!

We sang and hummed a mournful tune, hurrah, hurrah!

There are no fun chants that we sing,
We all are dying from ennui,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

We walked into the grove clockwise, hurrah, hurrah!

We slowed down as our dirge arised, hurrah, hurrah!

We stopped before we fell asleep,
the chant so dry it dragged our feet,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

The Senior Druid he called aloud, hurrah, hurrah!
We heard him call to earth and bowed, hurrah, hurrah!

He talked some more about the dirt
The ending phrase it was curt,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

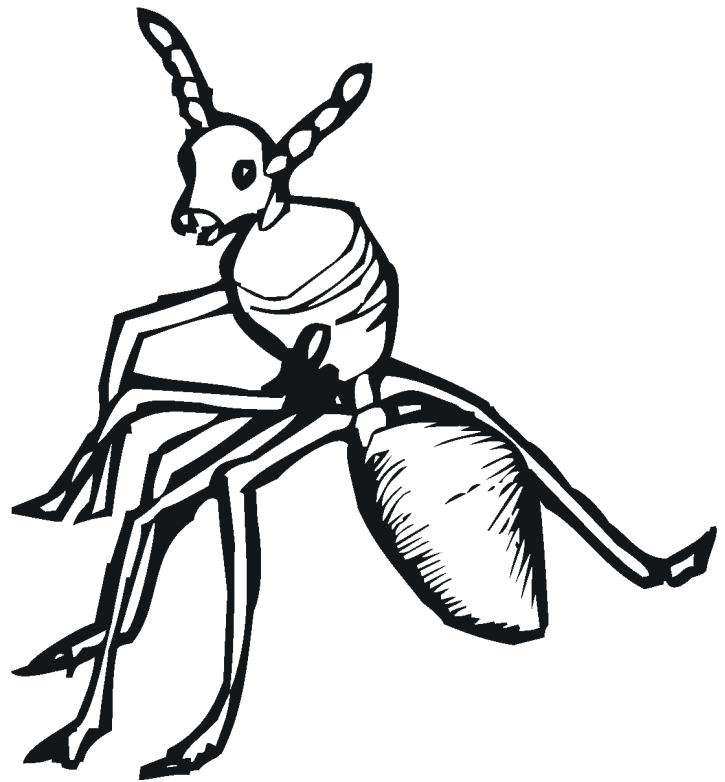
The Bard called out for inspiration, hurrah, hurrah!
It seemed that train had left the station, hurrah, hurrah!

He talks about it from a script,
We wish he'd memorize his schtick,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

We closed our eyes and looked inside, hurrah, hurrah!

Our hands were clasped our faces high, hurrah, hurrah!

We sought our center high and low



the SD led us blow by blow
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

The Seer's voice rang in the Well, hurrah, hurrah!
she held aloft a silver bell, hurrah, hurrah!

Her voice it warbled through the air
And I was pulling out my hair
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

The Fire blazed before the Bard, hurrah, hurrah!
he read his words from an index card, hurrah, hurrah!

Inspiration hadn't struck,
I hoped to be hit by a truck,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

The Tree it got the dumbest things, hurrah, hurrah!
A bit o' incense and water spring, hurrah, hurrah!

They threw it on the tree for show,
And didn't care where it did go,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies

and hoped the rite would end.

Then someone began to speak, hurrah, hurrah!
'bout why we're here but it was weak, hurrah, hurrah!

We knew all about the holiday,
but she told us again anyway,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

Next we told the nasties, "Go," hurrah, hurrah!
We called them names and told them so, hurrah,
hurrah!

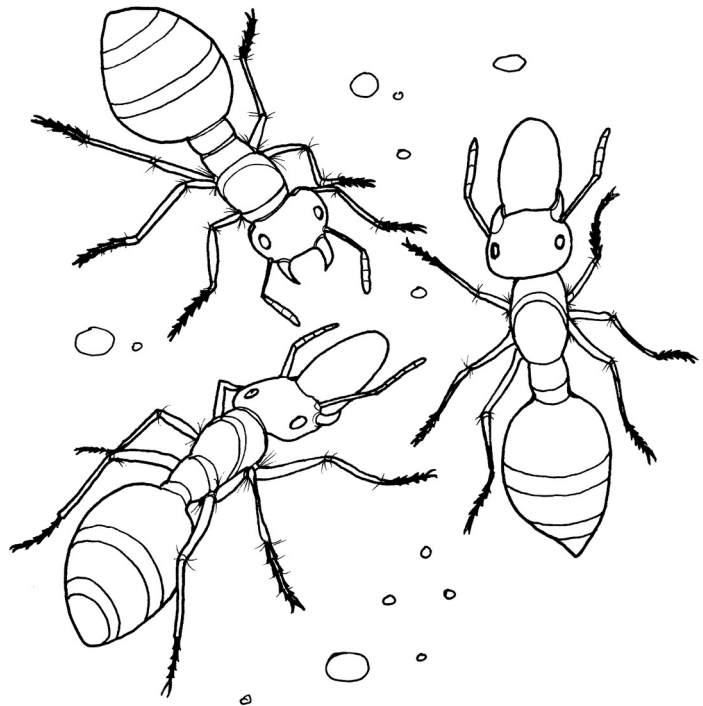
We probably shouldn't have called them that
cuz they're comin' back with a baseball bat
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

The senior druid stepped forward proud, hurrah,
hurrah!
He raised his hands and called aloud, hurrah, hurrah!

The gatekeeper came to the grove,
We were all relieved that he showed,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

Our fearless leader stood stock still, hurrah, hurrah!
He raised his hand and let it mill, hurrah, hurrah!
We rolled our eyes to watch the Gates
Open and flood all over the place,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

I plugged my ears as the Seer sounded, hurrah,
hurrah!
The Ancestors called were most confounded, hurrah,
hurrah!
We know they came from down to up
Hoping to shut our Seer up
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.



Crump'ling paper announced the Bard, hurrah, hurrah!
is memorization really that hard, hurrah, hurrah!
She called out to the Noble Ones
And I thought that we were undone,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

Now again the leader came up, hurrah, hurrah!
The olive oil in a dixie cup, hurrah, hurrah!
He called out to the Shining Gods
and fire nearly burned his bod,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

Recovering from his brush with fright, hurrah, hurrah!
Druid began the last summons that night, hurrah,
hurrah!
He called out to the patron God
Of grapes and dance who's somewhat odd,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

What happened next I daren't repeat, hurrah, hurrah!

Let's just say we lost our feet, hurrah, hurrah!
We didn't know what we had done
but I seem to remember lots of fun,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

Praises were sung when we all came to, hurrah, hurrah!

Suddenly we were two by two, hurrah, hurrah!
The praises continued for quite some time
I think someone sacrificed a mime
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

O! my knees are scuffed from kneeling here, hurrah, hurrah!

What caused my offerings to all be beer, hurrah, hurrah!
Head is bowed in confused quiet,
Back is aching from bacchic riot,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

Our leader brought out a bowl with spout, hurrah, hurrah!

We chanted a dirge then poured it out, hurrah, hurrah!
Our final offering to the Powers
Was this sweet water and some flowers
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

Our Seer sat upon the ground, hurrah, hurrah!
And drew three runes with nary a sound, hurrah, hurrah!

Omens looked bad but they sounded good
I quietly snickered in my hood,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

A bowl was brought out with water sweet, hurrah, hurrah!

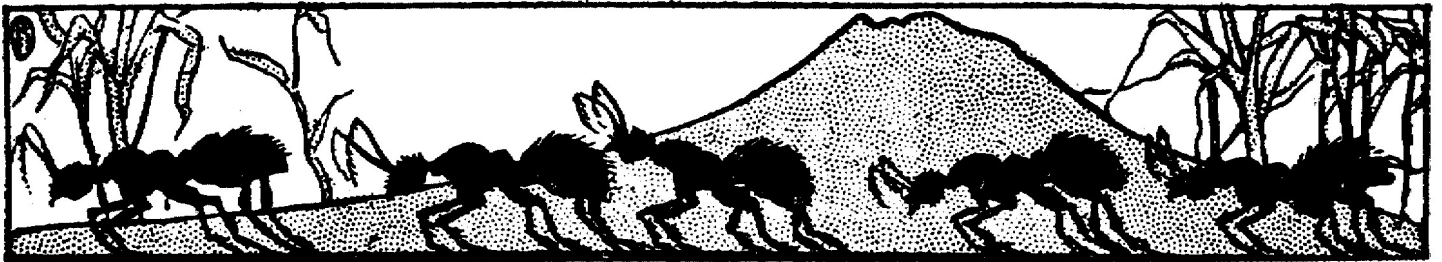
and everybody shuffled their feet, hurrah, hurrah!
We all got doused with holy spray,
And received our blessings on that day,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

As children yawned and adults sighed, hurrah, hurrah!

It was time to end and go inside, hurrah, hurrah!
The Powers were thanked in backwards order
The Gates were closed in hasty torture,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.

We sang a dirge as we walked out, hurrah, hurrah!
And sweaty people hug and shout, hurrah, hurrah!

The reason we're here of course is the food
Why else would we sit through a ritual so rude,
And we all just rolled our eyes
to the skies
and hoped the rite would end.





The Way of the Storyteller

by Ruth Sawyer

ISBN 0140044361

List Price \$15.00

The book that I am writing about is titled The Way of the Storyteller by Ruth Sawyer and was published by the Penguin Group, Inc in 1990. Born in Boston in 1880, Sawyer traveled throughout the United States, Ireland, and Spain, collecting a variety of stories that she was later to use in books such as The Year of Jubilo and Journey Cake, Ho!. Sawyer received a degree in literature and taught throughout the United States including St. Catherine's College in St. Paul, Minnesota, where a complete collection of her work is still kept and preserved to this day. Much of Sawyer's work involved children's stories and folk tales, particularly Christmas stories. Sawyer continued with her work and passion until her death in 1970.

Sawyer's purpose in writing this book was to examine storytelling as a folk art and a living art, tracing its evolution from the earliest narrative impulses throughout their transformation into written works. In addition to this, Sawyer instructs in the way of storytelling through freeing the creative imagination with discipline. The Way of the Storyteller was originally published in 1942 by Viking publishing and was revised in 1962 to what it is today. Sawyer begins the text with a brief introduction on the passion and the tradition of the storyteller, particularly with her Irish ancestors and the *Seancháís*.

Sawyer continues the text by describing the art of the storyteller and how it is something that must be learned though experience and cannot be academically taught. Sawyer also describes the different elements that storytellers use such as the proper approach for a story, effectiveness of telling tales and lore, and above all, passion. When a story is told, nothing exists in our perception except the story itself; not the teller, not the listener, for the story has a life of its own. Sawyer then continues with a brief overview of the historical development of the art of the storyteller and how the art has changed over time with the changing of society and the development of the written word. With this development, Sawyer states that two

schools of storytelling developed in Europe; the Gaelic school of Ollamh in Ireland, and the Cymric school of Bards in Wales; which included descriptions on how these schools functioned and what they did.

After Sawyer finishes the history of the storyteller in western culture, she goes into the different elements that are important to the storyteller, for which she provided complete chapters on each element. Experience, building a background, the importance of imagination, as well as others are covered and explained with her life experiences and lessons that she learned throughout her life, or at least until the text was written. Even storytelling to children and the use of poetry had their own chapters, where Sawyer describes her understanding of these elements. Sawyer then finishes the text with a collection of stories that cover a variety of topics that she learned on her travels through the United States and Europe as well as an index that has a list of different stories for specific occasions and audiences.

When I read this book, I found much of what she said interesting and insightful. It is quite clear that her passion for the art of storytelling has driven her choices in life. I also found it to be a great introduction to the way of storytelling. After I got done reading The Way of the Storyteller, I went through Celtic Heritage, another book that I am reading for the *Seancháís* study course and after reviewing what I have read, I found Celtic Heritage to be a greater source for storytelling than I previously realized. Even The Mabinogion, which I am currently reading has taken a new light. I will certainly be using The Way of the Storyteller as a source book for storytelling and I would recommend it to anyone who wishes to understand the way of storytelling, either to take as an art, or just to understand what it is that makes a storyteller what they are and why they are important to cultures and to society.

Reviewed by Corr Do'bhran



Festivals & Festival Reviews

ADF Festivals

Trillium Spring Gathering

When: April 21 - 24, 2005

Where: The Log Cabin Campground, Cross Junction, VA

Organizers: Little Acorn Grove, ADF

Contact: seabhacfionn@comcast.net

Website: <http://www.littleacorngrove.org/trillium/>

Desert Magic Festival

When: May 5 - 8, 2005

Where: Summerlands Stone Circle, Tucson, AZ

Organizers: Sonoran Sunrise Grove, ADF

Contact: druidkirk@direcway.com

Website: <http://www.ssg-adf.org/desertmagic.htm>

The Wellspring Gathering: ADF National Meeting

When: May 27 - 30, 2005

Where: Brushwood Folklore Center, Sherman, NY

Organizers: StoneCreed Grove, ADF (and the Mother Grove)

Contact: StoneCreed Grove, ADF

Website: <http://www.stonecreed.org/wellspring/>

Starwood Festival

When: July 19 - 24, 2005

Where: Brushwood Folklore Center, Sherman, NY

Organizers: ACE (with StoneCreed Grove, ADF)

Contact: webchameleon2@rosencomet.com

Website: <http://www.rosencomet.com/starwood/>

Summerland Gathering

When: August 26 - 28, 2005 (tentative)

Where: Yellow Springs, OH

Organizers: The 6th Night Grove, ADF

Contact: 6thnight@6thnight.org

Website: <http://www.6thnight.org/Summerland>

Fall Festival & Druid Gathering

When: September 15-18, 2005

Where: Four Quarters Farm, Artemis, PA

Organizers: Red Oak Grove, ADF

Contact: officers@redoakgrove.org

Website: <http://www.redoakgrove.org/fallfest/>

Three Realms: A Pacific Druid Festival

When: October 6 - 9, 2005 (tentative)

Where: Sage Hill Campground, Santa Barbara, CA

Organizers: Raven's Cry Grove, ADF

Contact: ThreeRealms@ravenscrygrove.org

Website: <http://ravenscrygrove.org/3realms.htm>

Walking With Fire: An Eastern Indo-European Conference

When: November 22 - 27, 2005

Where: Hollabrunn, Austria (one hour north of Vienna)

Organizers: Eastern Indo-European Kin, ADF

Contact: ratrija@perfumedscorpion.org

Website: <http://www.walkingwithfire.org/>

If you have attended an ADF festival and would like to share your experiences please contact us. Most any lengths are accepted and photographs of a good quality are always welcome. Share the memories, thoughts and things you learned at the festival(s) you attended this year! Contact us at oak-leaves@adf.org





Falling Acorns

Announcements

Wedding Announcement

The members of the Oak Leaves staff would like to send out congratulations and our wish for a long and happy life to newly weds Kari Eaves and Guild Barber. Blessings on your union!

Little Acorn Grove SD Kari Eaves and her sweetheart, Guild Barber, were married September 18th at Prince William Forest Park (site of the 2004 Trillium Gathering) in a Norse-flavored, stealthily druidic ceremony officiated by ADF Archdruid Emeritus Fox Adelman. The wedding was attended by a mix of Quakers, Mormons, Southern Baptists, Wiccans, Asatruar, OBOD members, and ADFers, and a good time was had by all! A Northern Scotland archaeological honeymoon followed.



Guild and Kari Barber.



From the left: Aesa (SD of Grove of the Seven Hills) Guild, Kari (SD of Little Acorn) and Fox (ADF Archdruid Emeritus). Fox officiated the ceremony and Aesa performed the household blessing.

Announcements

Death Announcement

Narabali Agnayi, Adhitin Ratrija and family would like to give honour to the child they lost: we did not yet know the beauty of your face, but we know you wait for us with the Fathers. They would also like to give thanks to the years of wonderful companionship and love from their two cats Shadow and Toast: be wary of the dogs of Yama and we shall meet again. And for Ratrija's Grandfather: you too shall be missed, may you reach whichever place you believed to exist.

Event Announcement

Trillium

Trillium 2005 will be held at the Log Cabin Campground, Cross Junction, VA, from April 21-24. ADF's own Ian and Liafal will be performing. Tent and camper sites available. More information at:

www.littleacorngrove.org/trillium

Walking With Fire

Walking With Fire 2005 will be held November 22nd through the 27th just outside of Vienna, Austria. Most meals are included and free accommodations within our home are available. The event will be split between workshops, rituals and sight seeing. Everyone must register to attend. Registration is free. For more information please visit:

<http://www.walkingwithfire.org>

Chenille Canopy Announcement

The Chenille Canopy would like to invite all women of ADF to join us. Below please find our statement of intent.

Chenille Canopy – Statement of Intent
November 29, 2004

The Chenille Canopy exists for the benefit of all women who are members of ADF.

It provides protection for new ideas, a safe haven for discussion and problem resolution as well as a supportive structure for women to pursue higher visibility roles within the organization.

Chenille Canopy does this by:

- Sponsoring weekend retreats, so far in April & November
- Maintaining a web site
- Hosting a discussion list on Yahoo groups
- Learning, sharing & celebrating "womens' mysteries" together

As the primary identification of ADF is that of a religious organization, likewise the Canopy is dedicated to the spiritual endeavors of its participants. Participation is open to all female members of ADF – both those who are in groves and our solitaries. Although we have started in the Heartland Region, our retreats are open to women of all regions with the hope that they will start to host their own as well.

The Chenille Canopy is not intended to be confrontationally divisive from our brothers in ADF, but we feel there is a great need within the organization for specifically women-oriented support. By separating ourselves from men on occasion to nurture each others' ideas, plans and visions as a group – we hope to strengthen individuals to become even more courageous in their contributions to ADF as a whole.

This point is especially important to us, so let's repeat it: we are not looking to weaken ADF but to strengthen it. Our sincere hope is that the knowledge, skills and insights we obtain from each other because of our interactions "under the Chenille" will then be disseminated into ADF as a whole as we return to our groves and our individual spiritual practices.

For additional information please visit us on the web at the following address:

<http://users.adelphia.net/~selenetawny/chenille/chenille.html>

May the gods bless our work.

The Women of the Heartland Region, ADF

Guild Reports

Dance Guild

As Guild Chief I admit I have not had much time to devote to helping the Dance Guild and its members to grow. My attention has been torn away by working on Oak Leaves but now I find my obligation has been fulfilled. Thus I am leaping right back into the Guild to try and get the ball moving again.

I have been purchasing various books on ritual dance and a great many instructional videos as well. I hope to compile a rather large resource list for our members. I am currently working on our Guild Business Plan. This plan will set forth goals for the guild for the next 5, 10, 25 and 50 years. It will also, hopefully, include the method for obtaining these goals.

One of our main goals is to create a study program of benefit to our members, all of ADF and the neo-pagan communities. In addition to having a study program which aids our members in personal growth we also want to show our fellow ADF members how important movement and dance are in ritual and we want to give even the most shy individual the tools they need to shake what they have been given!

In addition to dance training we also wish to offer training in the historical value of dance and movement in religion. This will include scholastic works by our members for the benefit of all ADFers. We also want to start pushing ritual dance to local festivals by way of dance heavy rituals and workshops on various religious dance and movement topics.

Over the next few months we will be discussing our business plan. This will be followed by opening the floor to study program ideas. We want to create a program which gives people the basics in ritual dance and then allows them to grow in an area of dance of their choosing. Our most current discussion is about defining ourselves

as a Guild.

Blessings of the Devas,

Narabali Agnaya
Dance Guild Chief

narabali@perfumescorpion.org

Kin Reports

Aus Dhwer, Eastern Indo-European Kin

2005 is upon us and we are growing in small numbers. The list is extremely quiet and the Officers have been working on a way to correct that situation by perhaps having monthly discussions on a specific topic or two.

Our plans for this years are to expand on our web site (<http://www.ausdhwer.org>) and create useful resources for those interested in the Eastern Indo-Europeans. We are also hosting Walking With Fire again, only this time it will be in a new home in Austria. More information on that can be found here:

<http://www.walkingwithfire.org>

After supplying Oak Leaves with some materials on Vedism, our next goal is to write some articles on the Indo-Iranians and then move on from there. By doing this we hope to educate Oak Leaves readers and generate more interest in the Eastern Indo-Europeans.

I hope that we will see many new faces joining the Kin and asking questions! You can find us on the web at:

<http://www.ausdhwer.org>

May the Devas bless you,
Adhitin Ratrija
Director of Aus Dhwer
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Placing the Home Shrine (Page 7)

Answering the Call of the Wild (Page 10)

Ritualizing to the Beat of a Different Ant (Page 34)

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submission guidelines

Oak Leaves seeks to provide a forum of sharing, learning and community growth through the content within its pages. You can help by submitting your articles, essays, art work, poetry, recipes, travel stories, reviews, thoughts, rituals, and announcements. Oak Leaves welcomes submissions from both non-members and members of ADF. Submissions may be sent to: Oak Leaves Submission c/o ADF, P.O. Box 17874, Tucson, AZ 85731-7874 or as attachments to: oak-leaves@adf.org. Submitted materials will not be returned to the sender. Oak Leaves cannot be responsible for manuscripts, photographs and art works. The content of all submitted material remains the property of the author/artist. Copyrights should be respected, and articles should not be reprinted without express permission from the author. All opinions expressed in Oak Leaves are those of the authors, and not necessarily of ADF.

Deadlines for submissions are:

Spring: January 1st

Summer: April 1st

Autumn: July 1st

Winter: October 1st

Answers For Crossword Puzzle In Issue 27:

Across

2. Holly
4. Boarshead
7. Santaclause
8. Evergreen
10. Wreath
12. Coins
14. Mistletoe
16. Feasting
17. Presents
20. Wintersolstice

Down

1. Saturnalia
3. Yulelog
5. Ice
6. December
7. Snowboarding
9. Wassail
11. Hockey
13. Stockings
15. Candles
18. Snow
19. Jol

Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship

P.O. Box 17874, Tucson, AZ 85731-7874

Membership and Subscription Form

One form per person please.

Beside your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address, please indicate whether the information is: Publishable (P), meaning it can be printed in ADF publications and we can give it out freely to people who wish to contact you; Sharable (S), meaning we can give it out to ADF members who request it; or Confidential (C), meaning that only the Mother Grove and ADF office staff will have access to it.

Legal Name: _____ P S C
Religious Name: _____ P S C
Address: _____ P S C
City: _____ State/Province: _____ Zip/Post Code: _____
Country: _____ Phone Number: _____ Birth Date: / / (mm/dd/yy)
Email Address: _____ P S C

The information on this form represents a:

- New Membership Renewal Revival of Expired Membership
- Information Update (if name/address changed indicate previous:)

If this is a new membership, where did you hear about us? _____

If this is a membership renewal please state your ADF membership number: _____

In which ADF Grove do you intend to participate in, if any? _____

ADF Membership Rates

Regular Membership _____ years @ \$15/year = \$ _____
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Total Due: \$ _____

Please mail this form with your check or money order (made payable to "ADF" in U.S. dollars only). Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing. There are special rates for Prisoners. Please contact us if you are a prisoner or are assisting one.

Under 18 Membership Waiver

If you are under the age of 18, you must have a parent or guardian sign this waiver to indicate her/his permission for you to join ADF, and that signature must be notarized.

I am 18 years of Age or Older: Yes No (Check one)

To whom it may concern: (enter child's name here) _____ has my permission to become a member of ADF, and I am fully aware of the Neopagan nature of this organization.

Parent/Guardian's signed name: _____ Parent/Guardian's printed name: _____

Notary Seal :

This form may also be found online at: <http://www.adf.org/joining/join.html>

