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The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin

Autumn 2007 ~ Issue No. 38





Sidney Eileen

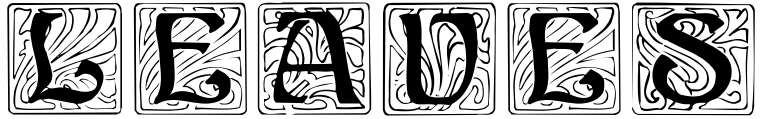
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The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin

Autumn 2007 • Issue No. 38

~Research and Religion~

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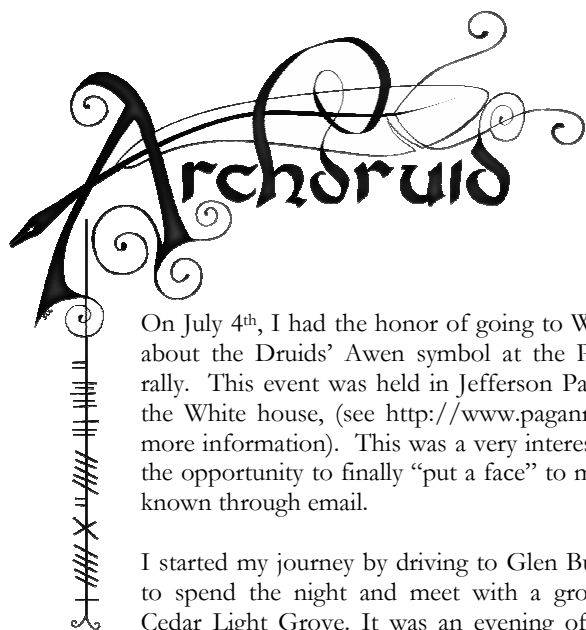
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On July 4th, I had the honor of going to Washington, DC to talk about the Druids' Awen symbol at the Pagan Religious Rights rally. This event was held in Jefferson Park, directly in front of the White house, (see <http://www.paganreligiousrights.org/> for more information). This was a very interesting trip, and gave me the opportunity to finally "put a face" to many people I had only known through email.

I started my journey by driving to Glen Burnie, MD on Tuesday to spend the night and meet with a group of members from Cedar Light Grove. It was an evening of interesting discussion over a potluck dinner, with many fine questions asked about the direction ADF is taking, regarding liturgy, study programs, etc.

On Wednesday, there was a short drive to the metro stop, then the train ride into the city. I hadn't been in Washington for years, so I was amazed at many of the changes that had been made. To give you an idea of how long it has been, the last time I was there, I had driven down Pennsylvania Avenue and stopped directly in front of the White House to take pictures. Now the entire block wide area around the White House is blocked off to vehicle traffic and barricaded. A sad commentary on the state of the country, and the people in office, I feel.

The rally led off with talks by Rev. Barry Lynn from the *Americans United for Separation of Church and State* organization and Rev. Selena Fox from *Lady Liberty League* and *Circle Sanctuary*, about the struggle to get the pentacle symbol approved for use on veterans headstones. It was wonderful that they were able to tell about their victory in the quest.

This was followed by Rev. Michael Akins from the *Military Pagan Network* and Rev. Marcia Drewry from the *Sacred Well Congregation*, discussing the long-standing battle to get Pagan clergy in the Military Chaplain's Corps. Both of them are retired military, and have very good resources for dealing with the people in charge of the Chaplain's Corps.

I led the next group of speakers, talking about the quest for the use of Druids' Awen symbol. This was followed by Stephen McNallen from the *Asatru Folk Assembly*, talking about the quest for the Thor's Hammer symbol. We would like both symbols to be available for use on deceased veterans headstones.

Continued on page 28

OAK LEAVES

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Welsh Healing Wells

By Rev. Kirk Thomas

Whenever modern people pass by a fountain, at least some of them cannot seem to resist throwing coins into the water. Fountains all over the western world are full of coins. This practice has even inspired a motion picture with a theme song sung by Frank Sinatra— *Three Coins in a Fountain*, produced in 1954. This modern folk practice doesn't stand isolated from history, rather it is a remnant of ancient and medieval practices from the British Isles and Ireland (at least). Here, the word 'well' usually refers to a natural spring, and it's interesting to note that the Welsh word for 'well', *ffynnon*, also means 'fountain' (Evans, 229). For this essay I shall limit the discussion to the cult of healing wells in ancient and medieval Wales.

Curative wells were considered sacred back in pagan times, with evidence going back at least as far as the Bronze Age. Sometimes they were associated with sacred trees and megaliths, and these, too, were venerated up into modern times, at least outside of Wales, where the practice seems to have died out early (Baring-Gould, 239). The slow transition from Pagan to Christian beliefs among the common people allowed the continuation of pagan practices, like well worship. One well, Ffynnon Gwenhwdw, may have retained the name of a pagan water deity (Jones, 29). This well continued to be venerated because it reputedly cured rheumatism. Indeed, the water from these healing wells often had a very high mineral content, which may partly account for the survival of the practice (Jones, 29).

In the early Middle Ages, clerics assailed the practice of venerating wells, with edicts coming out in every century. Finally, by the 11th century, these edicts only inveighed against the use of holy wells without the permission of the Bishop (Jones, 22). The church had finally compromised with the tradition.

As of 1992, 370 wells were known for being purely healing wells, while another 437 wells associated with saints and 62 associated with megaliths were also described as having healing properties. The diseases that the water from these wells was supposed to cure were primarily eye problems (blindness, weak sight, sore eyes, etc.), rheumatism, skin diseases, warts, lameness and fractures and sprains. There were a few wells, however, reputed to cure cancer, hemorrhoids, indigestion, gout, epilepsy, paralysis, and even hangovers (Jones, 97-98).

Offerings were made to the wells, and by medieval times, a healing often depended on it. This tradition can be seen to be directly related to the ancient Celtic practice of mak-



Gwenfrewry's Healing Waters

ing offerings to bodies of water. Diodorus Siculus, who wrote between c. 60-c. 30 BCE, said that the Celts laid down much gold for the Gods, and no one "dares to touch these sacred depositions, even though the Celts are an especially covetous people" (Koch, 12). The items found in 1944 in Anglesey in the lake of Llyn Carreg Bach, including martial items, a bronze binding for a staff and a trumpet (Aldhouse-Green, 22 & 183), represent a Welsh example of Iron Age water deposits.

Medieval well offerings tended to be clothes, rags, pins, buttons, buckles, coins, thorn points, flowers, stones and fowls. Ffynnon Digweg in Caernarvonshire even had eggs offered to it. Rags were hung from the branches of trees while most other things were usually thrown into the well. Pins have been found in wells from Roman times all over Britain, and seemed to have been very popular items of offering. In Wales, some 51 wells have been identified with pin offerings (Jones, 92-93). In ancient days these would have been offerings to the deity of the well, with devotion transferring over to the local saint in later years.

With the coming of Christianity, it was only natural that worship of well deities would be transferred to the saints of the 6th to 8th centuries CE. While not all holy wells were used for healing, most of those dedicated to the saints were healing wells. One of them, which is located near a farm which used to belong to the Melchior family, was St. Teilo's well at Llandeilo in Pembrokeshire. At one time, the farm used to house a very interesting relic, reputed to be the brainpan from St. Teilo's skull. This relic is now housed in a special niche in the Cathedral at Llan-

daff, near Cardiff. Water from the saint's well, when drunk out of the skull of the saint, was said to cure all ailments, but particularly whooping cough and pulmonary problems (Baring-Gould, 239). For the cure to work, the skull with the water in it had to be lifted out of the well and handed to the sick person by a senior member of the Melchior family. When the family sold the skull in the early years of the 20th century, the cures came to a stop (Henken, 134). Baring-Gould and Fisher claim that the skull pan is actually one from the body of a young person, so it couldn't possibly be that of St. Teilo (Baring-Gould, 239).

St. Dewi's healing specialty, when he was alive, was the curing of blindness, so it's only fitting that some of his holy wells perform the same function. One of them gained its healing powers when St. Dewi used it to heal a blind girl at a prayer meeting (Henken, 73). In fact, the curing of eye problems can be associated with the wells of other saints as well, such as St. Cybi and St. Doged. St. Cybi's well at Llangybi in Carnarfonshire was good for curing eyes as well as problems of the limbs, scrofula, scurvy and rheumatism (Henken, 236). St. Doged's well was praised for healing eyes by the poet Ieuan Llwyd Bryddyd after it cured his eyes which had been painfully injured when he was thrown by his horse into a thorn bush (Henken, 250).

Other saints' wells cured other problems. The water of St. Ieuan Gwas Padrig's well was very cold and said to be an excellent cure for swollen knees (Henken, 253), and St. Cynhafal's well cured wounds. He may have been a warrior and was reputed to have killed a giant (Henken, 274-276).

Probably the most famous healing well would have been that of St. Gwenfrewy (St. Winefride) at Holywell in Flintshire. The waters from this well could cure almost anything. The anonymous *Life of St. Winifred* states that it cured cripples, dropsy, epilepsy, muteness, blindness, stones, worms, gout, melancholy, sciatica, cancer, madness and even hemorrhoids (Pepin and Feiss, 108-111). This holy well still has quite a collection of crutches, abandoned by cripples after their cures.

Why were these holy wells so enduring? Obviously, many

cures must have taken place after drinking or bathing in the waters. The high mineral content of the water in some of the holy wells must account for at least part of their health giving virtues. And the power of faith must have played a large role. Without dismissing the possibility that cures happened through spiritual intervention, it must be said that strong belief alone can influence health. The

placebo effect is a well-recognized phenomenon in the modern medical world. Sometimes, when people expect a cure to take place, it does (Nordenberg). But whatever the cause, the curative powers of holy wells were sought after by large numbers of people in Wales over the space of at least 2,000 years.



The relic of St. Teilo's skull at Llandaff

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Comparing Sheepeaters to the Ancient Celts

By Aigeann/Cathy

Before my recent visit to Yellowstone, I did a brief search on the internet for information regarding the Native Americans who may have lived in that area. I stumbled upon several references to “Sheepeaters,” which are of the Shoshone or Shoshoi Indians, also known as the Snake Indians or the New or Newe (plural Neweni, meaning “The People”). The word “Shoshone” has been translated to mean, “inland,” apparently stemming from a combination of words meaning “abundant grasses”.

While I admit that I have not been able to do extensive research on these people, I have discovered some preliminary and interesting similarities to the ancient Celts. These findings, I believe, further support my personal opinion that the culture of the Celts was much like that of the Native Americans. Because of this, when I come to a gap in information regarding the Celts, and by extension the Druids, my practice has been to look for related information on our continent’s Native Americans. Admittedly, this is not a fool-proof solution, and at times the splicing together of two such different cultures probably creates several unforeseen problems. However, I have found this to be the best option for my own spiritual questions until more is discovered about the Celts and Druids or a time machine becomes available for my use.

As many know, the Celts were not a race but were instead differentiated by their languages, mainly P Celtic and Q Celtic, and these can be roughly related to an area of the world. (1) The Shoshone as a whole are also identified by their language, and further by the general area they lived in before being moved onto reservations. They are also identified specifically by what their diet was based upon. At this point in my study, I have determined that they can be very generally divided into the Eastern and Western Shoshone. The Eastern Shoshone relied heavily upon horses once they were introduced, and their culture mimics that of other Plains tribes such as the Lakota. The Western Shoshone did not depend upon horses, although a few bands did have them. The Sheepeaters, or Tukudika (meaning Meateaters), of the greater Yellowstone area usually are regarded as a sub-tribe or band of the Western Shoshone, and are often described as the Mountain Shoshone.

The Sheepeaters lived so high in the mountains (sometimes in caves), and in such a rugged environment that travel by horses was not practical. Also, the forage needed to sustain horses was often too scarce to be used for anything other than to feed their people. They instead used dogs as both pack animals and for assistance in hunt-

ing. Additionally, I would hazard a guess that dogs also functioned as a type of security system. Therefore, it appears that dogs were to the Sheepeaters what the horses were to the Celts, although dogs, too, were extremely important to the Celts.

The Celts worshipped spirits of place along with their individual clan God. It appears that the Sheepeaters practiced a form of animism as well. (2) Their belief was that each geyser had its own spirit which could be either good or bad. Additionally, it seems logical to conclude that both the Celts and Sheepeaters believed in magic, because the Sheepeaters held that the spray from certain geysers would make them invisible. The details of this are as follows, quoted from:

<http://www.windriverhistory.org/exhibits/sheeptrunk/Sheep%20Eater%20Text.pdf>:

Anthropologist, Ake Hultkrantz, who studied the Sheep Eaters earlier this century, initially thought that the reason these people avoided areas of geyser activity was because they were fearful of them (Loendorf 166). After interviewing some Shoshone Indians, Hultkrantz learned that the Sheep Eaters were probably not that fearful of the geysers, but respected them. George Wesaw, a Shoshone Indian reported to Hultkrantz that his people believed the geysers to be holy:

“The Indians prayed to the geysers because they believed that there were spirits inside them. Sometimes, when nearing enemies, they let the water from the geysers spray over them so they became invisible” (Loendorf 166 [Hultkrantz 1954: 46]).

The spirits of the hot springs and the geysers were felt to be the homes of both good and bad spirits. Some Shoshone believe that a “dragon” once lived in the Hot Springs of Thermopolis, Wyoming. It is also told that other aquatic spirits and creatures dwelled in the thermal features of the area such as water ghosts and pan dzoavits who were believed to make “the water boil” (Loendorf, 166). Pan dzoavits have also been thought to be associated with dzoavits, who were both supposedly mean-hearted spirits who dwelled on the tops of mountains. “Most Shoshoni I asked said that this kind of spirit is extinct nowadays,” however they “may exist underground or underwater...” (Loendorf 166)

[Hultkrantz 1954: 46)

It is known from the countless items gathered from bogs, caves, wells and streams that the Celts practiced a votive religion, that is, they made sacrifices. For some background on Celtic offerings, please see <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~liskmj/living-spring/sourcearchive/fs8/fs8cl1.htm>. In turn, the skulls of bighorn sheep have been found high in the trees, and are thought to have been offerings by the Sheepeaters to the Great Spirit.

I have read several descriptions that the Druids, modern and ancient, are sun worshipers who prefer to hold rituals on liminal areas such as mountain tops, wetlands, headwaters, and even in the fog. Even this rings true with the Sheepeaters as documented in an interview with one of their last living people, which can be read at <http://www.lemhi-shoshone.com/tukudikas.html>.

Both the Druids and the Sheepeaters felt that language skills were valuable, as evidenced in Celtic mythology and by the words of arguably the last known living full blooded Sheepeater, named "The Woman Under The Ground," whose quote I am including below from <http://www.trailtribes.org/lemhi/whos-who.htm>:

"We chanted our songs to the sun, and the Great Spirit was pleased. He gave us much sheep and meat and berries and pure water, and snow to keep the flies away. The water was never muddy."

Until the Roman Empire eventually defeated the Celts, their metal work was so advanced that for centuries the Celts were invincible. Likewise, the Sheepeaters developed a type of bow that was so powerful they had no need for guns. This bow was created by soaking the horns from the bighorn sheep in hot mineral springs until it was soft enough to reshape. It is said that a single arrow from these forceful bows was able to pierce through the bodies of two bison.

Another surprising similarity is the common use of natural dyes among indigenous peoples. It is believed that the Picts used Woad to create a blue dye and the text suggests that the Sheepeaters used Oregon Grape to create a yellow dye.

Now, I would like to touch on a controversial subject for many on the path of the Druid. This is the topic of ecstatic trance, or the contacting of the spirits of the Otherworld. Like so many aspects of spirituality, I believe this issue boils down to individual interpretation and/or "UPG," which boils down to individual interpretation and/or unsubstantiated personal gnosis (UPG). I am in the camp

that does think that the ancient Druids practiced their own form of it. I support my opinion by my interpretations of the stories of Cú Chulainn and the Tarb Fes, or Bull Feast. For those interested, I recommend an article that can be found at:

<http://www.digitalmedievalist.com/faqs/shaman.html>.

Along this line of thinking, I have read that it is believed the pre-Celts created their stone carvings to assist in ecstatic trance. Arguably the most notable of these may be the carvings around Newgrange. Pictures of them may be seen at www.knowth.com. The Sheepeaters probably also practiced a form of ecstatic trance, according to records of conversations with their descendants on reservations. The descendants told Caucasians that it was through dreams, taking part in Sun Dances, or the participation in vision quests that individuals were bestowed with supernatural power. This is explained in the following quoted passage also from:

<http://www.windriverhistory.org/exhibits/sheeptrunk/Sheep%20Eater%20Text.pdf>.

Note the reference to purification:

"The Shoshone did not typically divulge their beliefs and religious practices to outsiders, some basic understanding of the procedure of a vision quest is known to non-natives (Hultkrantz 52). It is said that a male is the typical participant of this supernatural power seeking process, and he is expected to: "ride(s) a horse up to the foothills where the rock drawings are at a distance of some 200 yards from the rock with pictographs he tethers his horse. Then he takes

a bath to cleanse himself in the nearest creek or lake. Without moccasins he walks up to the rock ledge just beneath the drawings and makes his camp there. Naked, except for a blanket around him, he lies down there under the open sky, waiting for the spirits to appear. Sometimes, I was told, the supplicant directs a prayer to a particular spirit depicted on the rock panel, anxious to receive that very power. As we shall see, each spirit that blesses its client does so with a special gift related to the spirit's own abilities" (Hultkrantz 53). Rock art of the Sheep Eaters Petroglyphs are pictures that were typically engraved or pecked on soft rock like sandstone. This type of rock art was produced by American Indians such as the SheepEaters. It is thought that the Sheep Eaters drew their elaborate pictures on the sandstone by the pecking on the rock with antlers or harder rock. It is impossible to date the petroglyph itself, however other sources of related evidence such as algae growth close to the vicinity of the drawing may prove helpful in dating of the rock art (The Wind

RiverRendezvous Vol. XVIII: 2). Torrey Valley Petroglyph that shows resemblance to both human and animal form Pictographs are paintings done on rocks and can be located in several different areas of Wyoming. Wyoming's early inhabitants converted minerals, charcoal and plants into a painting medium. Pictographs were mostly painted on rocks that possessed porous surfaces, as it would absorb the paint better. (The Wind River Rendezvous Vol. XVIII: 3). Theories about the petroglyphs of the Wind River ValleyThe meanings of the Wind River Valley petroglyphs cannot ever truly be understood for sure as their creators are not around to question. Some believe that these drawings or peckings represent spiritual or mythical beings, others suggest that these petroglyphs represent something more on the personal level, like one's dreams or occurrences (The Wind River Rendezvous Vol. XVIII: 3). Some people speculate that the figures in these petroglyphs may be linked to "hunting magic". Though we do not totally understand the practices of the Sheep Eaters, some believe that individuals may have practiced the art of luring animals into a certain area by drawing their images on the rocks of that location(The Wind RiverRendezvous Vol. XVIII: 3). Many of the petroglyphs found near Torrey Creek, an area that is believed by archeologists to be a familiar residence of the Sheep Eaters, are made up of images that resemble human and animal figures (The Wind RiverRendezvous Vol. XVIII: 6). Anthropologist, Ake Hultkrantz describes how some places like Crowheart Butte, were areas where some Native Americans may have written their war records. It is believed that individuals would travel to places like Crowheart Butte to seek guidance and aid from "good guardian spirits" (Hultkrantz 49). Some say that the petroglyphs found in such places like Crowheart Butte, Sage Creek, Owl Creek and other similar areas have either been drawn by individuals in order to represent such guardian spirits, or have been produced by the spirits that dwell there (Hultkrantz 49). According to Hultkrantz: "Indians have told me that in the spring and summer they have discovered new drawings on the rock face, apparently pecked by the spirits since their last visit. Some Shoshoni who approach the rock drawing places in the wintertime may hear the spirits working on them. When they withdraw from the place they can again hear the knocking" (Hultkrantz 49).41 Though Hultkrantz was able to interview some Shoshone of more recent times, these individuals may have been continuing their ancestor's traditions and beliefs. One of Hultkrantz's sources remarks was

that, "the spirits are not as common today as they were in the old days. The power lines and poles especially have scared them away. They have retreated for good to the mountains" (Hultkrantz 49). Many of these sacred sites that were formerly used, have been abandoned for one reason or another. There is some speculation that the influx of white settlers may have deterred the Shoshone from returning to these spaces as they may have deemed these sites as "useless"

My final point of similarity between the two cultures includes the Sheepeaters' winter shelters, called Wickiups, that were created from placing logs, grass mats, and skins into a cone-shaped structure. To me, these are like the Bronze Age round huts or hut circles of Scotland and surrounding lands. For more about those, please read: <http://www.caithness.org/caithnessfieldclub/bulletins/2003/strathnaverhistory.htm> Plus, while this is admittedly a bit of a stretch, the Wickiups remind me of the pre-Celtic wood henges.

In closing, I feel that everyone must come to their own conclusion about the details of their spiritual path, and I accept that my spirituality may have little in common with anyone else's. I do recommend a visit to Yellowstone National Park, and think that it should be experienced by everyone who feels the calling of the Druid's path. I feel that it is a place that will fill even the most jaded soul with a renewed sense of appreciation for Nature and our country.

For more information regarding Yellowstone from the World Wide Web (especially for those with children), I recommend the following websites:

<http://www.nps.gov/yell/>
<http://www.yellowstonegeographic.com/flashsplash.html>
<http://www.ypf.org>

For those interested in more about the Sheepeaters, especially via the Internet, I highly recommend reading the entire previously mentioned site:

<http://www.windriverhistory.org/exhibits/sheeptrunk/Sheep%20Eater%20Text.pdf>

The following books were recommended to me by the Research Library located at Yellowstone Park:

Restoring a Presence: American Indians and Yellowstone National Park by Peter Nabokov, Lawrence Loendorf ISBN: 0806135891

Mountain Spirit: The Sheep Eater Indians of Yellowstone by Lawrence L. Loendorf, Nancy Medaris Stone ISBN: 0874808677



Leborcham speaks to Deirdre
By Jenne Micale

you think I did not know, when you came
with ringlets dearer gold than ingots
and that dread beauty -- a pitcher plant
luring with its satin and its doom

white black red, you said -- a raven at
the feast of death on the blank white sheet
of winter, hung out to dry on trees
bleak and black, the Cailleach's laundry.

you think I did not know of desire --
the tall, twisted tree of me, with my
curled lips strained with curses and song and
mockeries that could slay kings with words.

for who am I, the daughter of slaves
who caught a druid's eye with her wit
and took the job to fence you in, you
with fate around your head, a thorn-ring.

but bards are the keepers of secrets,
and a daughter of slaves more so.
your broad wings clipped by royal decree --
future concubine, caged hawk, hooded.
for bards are the keepers of secrets

and you -- a cipher, a key lost to the lock.
the hawk must seize the air and sparrow --
so clear the kenning, the end, the tale.

white black red -- the desire runs through you
carving red rivers through the hillsides,
the king pursing, the green graves you
leave in your footprints like daisies, hope.

the endless flight under your feathers,
until you're reeled back to the arm and
corded, blind, and choose the branch and stone
your eggshell skull spilling its yolk.

fly, bird, fly. here is the key to
all riddles, all desires, all the pain
of your name. and I give you his, and
unlatch the wire gate of your prison.

for bards are the keepers of secrets,
and the tellers of them, with sharp tongues
edging brutal fates from the still air.
I knew the tale before its telling.

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Giftng and ADF

By Steven C. Sampson , PhD

Having just attended Desert Magic, my thoughts are filled with warm wishes towards all and joyful recollections of a magical weekend. I am in a state of bliss and happiness.

We pagans, the laughing people, are blessed in so many ways. The joy that Ian and Sue bring with their song and energy, Archdruid Skip with his twinkling eyes, and Jenni with her glorious breasts are all part of the magic that I experienced this last weekend, the same magic that happens all around the country as we ADF Druids gather.

I realize that the Sonoran Sunrise Grove paid the travel and lodging for presenters to be at this weekend, and I am so glad— otherwise I would have missed out on meeting them and getting to experience their energy.

Thank you SSG!

Another realization came to me — that we as a group benefit greatly from ADF *Oak Leaves*, the festivals, the writing, the rituals. It all works in my heart and spirit, and I want it to keep working and keep happening.

If I ask something of the Gods, I expect to gift them something, and trust that they will gift me back. This is a basic law of my life.

I have come to believe that if I receive a gifting from anything, then I have to put gifting energy back in order to support it and have it continue and complete the circle of giving. ADF has been gifting me with a collection of wonderful people, rites, gatherings, and fellowship. I have become aware of my obligation to gift back to ADF. I understand that there is even an old Proto-Indo-European word for this gifting back and forth—**ghosti-*—thank you, Ceil!

Starting in June I pledge a monthly gifting to ADF. I realize how important the fellowship is to me and I do want it to continue and to grow stronger.

I know that the ADF office struggles to keep ahead of our debts (laughing - just like we all do) and that my contribution will fulfill my spiritual obligation to complete the energy I get from the organization. I also plan to put ADF in my will and am starting estate planning, so that upon my death the gifting can continue.

I would like others who have an awareness of the responsibility of gifting to consider doing the same it will strengthen ADF and I know it will keep the blessing flowing. So, happy **ghosti-* to ADF and to me!



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Sumble Oaths

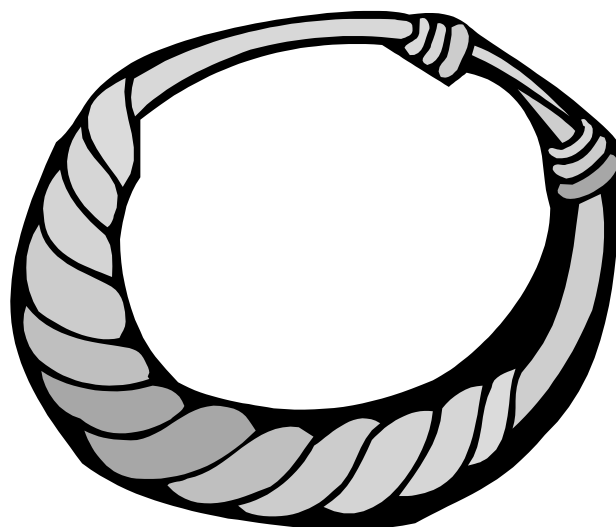
By Seamus

At this year's Wellspring sumble I sat and listened to many wonderful things. I listened with pride as the warriors stood up and offered boasts of their weekend deeds. I listened to friends both old and new hail their Gods and share in ritual fellowship. I also heard many things that made my eye tic.

In an effort to keep frith I bit my tongue and sat on my hands. I did not want to be harsh and ruin the great feelings that sumble creates. I still don't, but I do feel that we need to examine the word 'oath'. Webster's Dictionary defines oath as "a solemn usually formal calling upon God or a god to witness the truth of what one says or to witness that one sincerely intends to do what one says." The Encyclopedia Britannica states that an oath is "a sacred or solemn voluntary promise usually involving the penalty of divine retribution..."

I think when oaths are used properly they are very powerful, binding, sacred acts. Oaths taken in front of the community tie that community to the *wyrd* of that oath and bind the people together spiritually like few other acts do. Unfortunately, I think we have cheapened the act by overuse and frivolous behavior. We should take heed of the warnings of the Havamal and the Sagas. Time and again we see the downfall of those that fail to keep their oaths or make unwise oaths. I think when oathing one should remember that it is a sacred thing, and we should weigh our words carefully and oath only important things. It may be fun to get caught up in the ritual and oath "to eventually get your DP program done" or "to help someone any way you can," but it lessens the act, and the words ring hollow. If I oath to mow my lawn, what have I achieved in regards to the sacred act, except make my wife faint? But if I oath to work with the nature spirits and to maintain the lawn and garden weekly (mowing/weeding etc) and make an altar for my patrons in the corners of my yard by next September, then maybe it would carry more weight in the eyes of the community and the Shining ones. Oathing to help someone any way I can is a rather open ended oath that could have dire results. Does that mean you would give me a kidney? Would you give me a place to live for four months if I lost my job? Or would we better suited to say specifically what we mean to say?

We should take heed and reflect on what we are doing and saying, always remembering that what is said over the horn or well is sacred and should be treated with holy reverence. I ask that we all be careful what we oath and how often. We do not want to cheapen the holy act. I certainly



hope that the sumble format is used in the future. Although it can be a test in moderation and endurance, in my mind nothing beats a sumble for truly building community. I would ask that we think about assigning a Thyle to the ritual. A Thyle should be someone with a working knowledge of modern heathenism. It is the Thyle's job to keep frith in the hall, keep hall etiquette, and to challenge oaths for more information or clarification. It would then be up to the Dryhten (Lord of the hall), or in our case the ritual officiate/Senior Druid, to decide whether or not an oath would be accepted. If an oath is accepted, then the Thyle would also be responsible to follow up to ensure that all oaths are kept/completed. I would also suggest that we have an object such as an oath ring or sickle on which to make oaths. This will help keep the act grounded and add weight to the oath. Remember—it is important to keep your oaths, but it may be more important to limit your oaths to the really important things.

Notes: Much of this letter is my views and should not be taken as anything more than personal thoughts. I would like to acknowledge The Troth and the Norse Kin members for their thoughts and opinions and to Dan O'Halloran for his published work "Fire in the Head: A Tradition of Ritualized Drinking" *Idunna* –Issue 56



Connecting with Nature Spirits of Locality

By Medb Aodhamair

I am an Amateur Ethnobotanist, which basically means that the world is my salad bar. Essentially ethnobotanists study the complex relationship between plants and cultures. It is an exciting and interesting way to look at the world and I have been lucky enough to receive my training first-hand and not just from books.

Growing up in a Northern California hippie family, I have always had a special affinity for nature. When I was a child we, my parents, myself, and my little sister had little money and we lived in a VW camper van in several campgrounds for quite a while. My mother would often work as a waitress while my father stayed in camp with us during the day. My father and I, and sometimes my little sister, supplemented the food my Mom brought home by hunting, trapping, and foraging.

My father was no Euell Gibbons but he was a passable mountain man. We would fish and set out quail or rabbit traps in the morning and in the afternoon we would search the meadows and mountain slopes for wild edibles. We collected cactus, sorrel, pig weed, dandelions, mushrooms, fennel, blackberries, gooseberries, acorns, black walnuts, wild onions, wild garlic, tubers, miner's lettuce, and of course wild asparagus. Sometimes we had more food than we could eat.

I think this is when my real love and appreciation for nature began. I have always felt at home in the wild, no matter the climate or terrain. So when I was first asked to write this article by a lanky Discordian wearing a fedora hat and a Cheshire grin it seemed like a natural thing to consent to. I sat down and thought about my relationship with nature and the nature spirits and particularly my relationship with the nature spirits of locality.

One of the first things I realized is that your relationship with nature spirits is one of hospitality. You are visiting them in their home and are, in a sense, a guest. So it seems natural that you would treat them with respect and thank them for allowing you to visit. Likewise, when you are trying to establish a relationship with a person you visit with them frequently, invite them to lunch, and learn everything you can about their lives. You wouldn't call a neighbor that you wave at occasionally and visit only one or two times a year at barbecues, a friend. Neither should you consider visiting nature spirits once or twice a year a relationship.

Besides treating nature with proper respect and reciprocating their hospitality, there are two major ways to establish

a friendship or relationship with them; visit them and research them. First, you can do a lot of research on native plants and animals in your area and how the native people from your area worked with them. You can also learn about the natural history of the area. Second, you can spend time hiking and walking through the natural areas in your region. Find one or two areas that really feel nice to you or choose one that needs a little help and spend time learning every plant, rock, and animal in the area.

The research will come in handy because it is nice to know if you are talking to a juniper or a pine tree. It is kind of rude to continue addressing "friends" by the wrong names. Doing this research also helps you to understand the relationship that the native people had with these plants. Are they edible? Were they used to make rope? Were structures often built from them? Were they used medicinally? Did the native people do any particular thanking ceremonies for the plants before or after harvesting them? This is the part where you learn all you can about your "friend's" history.

Spending time in nature will also help you to attune with the spirits of the place, also called spirits of locality. You can discover plants and stones that are just calling out to be talked to. You may discover a special place that you feel compelled to do an offering or even a ritual. You will learn the trails and which plants are at each turn. Over time you will be able to tell when plants are getting ready to bloom or send out new shoots and you will become used to subtle weather shifts and be able to tell when it is about to rain or even snow.

Once you have learned about the nature in your area and have spent time communing with the nature spirits of the area, doing a ritual to acknowledge the local nature and land spirits is a good step toward establishing a relationship with them. Try using divination in this ritual to determine if you are going in the right direction. Remember that we, humans, have done a lot of harm to the local nature and land spirits and in some cases have even driven away the native people who once honored and revered them. For these reasons they may not have reason to trust you initially. So don't be overly distressed if you don't get a positive divination the first time around. Continue working at the relationship and asking the nature spirits what they need from you.

Sometimes it is rather evident from the sad state of these natural areas what they need. Organize a monthly or weekly clean-up or work with an existing group. Carry

garbage bags and latex gloves with you when you hike. Make offerings of bone meal or other fertilizing agents but try to steer clear of seeds. While seed, even bird seed, seems like a nice idea in your own yard, many are not native to the area you are hiking and are not appropriate offerings in the wild. Delicate ecologies often do not do well when invasive foreign species are introduced so please avoid anything non-native that could germinate (trust me I've been part of eradication teams that are trying to deal with this type of problem, it is hard work).

You may want to consider journaling your experience and taking photographs of area that you are working with so that you can see how far your efforts have taken you. Volunteering with local trail guide groups and giving classes on local ecology, water conservation, ethnobotany, geology, or geography are also great ways to get in tune with

nature and the spirits of locality. As a guest lecturer I am often surprised by how much I learn from my students and how often I discover new and wonderful places from people who have lived in the area much longer than I have.

All this may seem a bit complicated but it isn't really. Basically, a good relationship with nature and the nature spirits of your area is the same as a relationship with a good friend. You talk to them often, share things with them, respect them, help them, and love them. In Frankenstein Mary Shelly wrote, "the very winds whispered in soothing accents, and maternal Nature bade me weep no more." This is a nice reminder that this relationship is reciprocal and that when you need comfort the nature spirits will be there for you in return.



2007 Eight Winds Mountain Earth Gathering

ADF Northwest Regional Gathering
Saturday, September 29, 2007

Co-hosted by the Sierra Madrone Grove and the Clan of the Triple Horses Grove
At Diamond Lake Resort - Oregon

Our Activities Include:

Workshops:

- Chaos and Cosmos - Bringing them together
- Symbols and Tales of the Arthurian Myths relating to Our Druidry
- Oregon Medicinal and Rare Plants
- Connecting with Nature Spirits of Locality

Cost:

We are requesting a \$20 donation per family OR a donation of a dish to share with at least 8 people - this can be a side dish for lunch or dinner or a finger food or a dessert. Alternatively, Volunteer to help!

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For more information, please contact:

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or

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Waters of Life

By Sean Harbaugh

The Waters of Life "part" of ADF ritual has its origins in the RDNA (Reformed Druids of North America) where the mixture is 50% scotch to 50% water. The students at Carlton College celebrated the Waters of Life during their Ritual. Robert Larson brought the Reformed out to Berkeley, met Isaac, Joan, Stephen, and several others. They formed the NRDNA, and then the early versions of the Liturgical design that we use today in ADF.

The cup that we celebrate the Waters in represents the cauldron. The cauldron represents many things, but the main symbolism is inspiration, wisdom, rebirth, and bounty. The theme goes back to Taliesin and the Cauldron; Bran and the Cauldron of Plenty; Fionn and the Cauldron; and many other Celtic myths. The Cauldron represented life in the form of food. It represented wisdom in the form of the brew Ceridwen made (the story of the three drops on Taliesin's thumb). The cauldron represented celebration. The act of passing the horn or cup during ritual or holiday is a long celebrated tradition of honoring one's deeds and honoring the ancestors.

Later as the Christianizing of Britain occurred you found the cauldron morphing into other symbols like the Holy Grail, the Fountain of Youth, and the Well at Lourdes. You see the change in Arthur as he losses touch with his Pagan roots, and with the Land. As the King gets ill, the Land suffers. It isn't until he gets the Grail that the Land and Sovereignty is restored. But the symbolism of the Water restoring the blessings to the people of the Land emphasizes the importance the Oath between people and Land are for their relationship to each other.

In Scots Gaelic it is also the word for whiskey. So when you are giving a toast, you are celebrating the Waters of Life—the life giving pure water from the Underworld, the wisdom of the ancestors. The Scots consider the Waters that which ties them to the land, and a throwback to the local river or water deity. It is the sacred Waters that made the whiskey that filled them with the blessings of the Gods. It was a contract or oath between the people and the land itself—the Earth Mother. The act of taking a drink when giving an oath or signing a contract is done today. This is kind of like "sealing the deal". So when we pass the waters (or depending on the Grove, asperse the crowd with the Waters, or fill individual cups), we are celebrating the act of sacrifice to the Gods, and toasting them in return. We are asking them to "seal the deal" in our Ritual.

There are as many ways of celebrating this act in ADF



The Water from St. Teilo's Well at Llandeilo, Pembrokeshire

COoR as there are Groves in ADF. As stated earlier some choose to pass the horn or cup, asperse the crowd, or fill individual drinking vessels with the Waters as they are blessed. It is the sacred acts itself of allowing the Gods to fill the Waters with their blessings, not the mechanics that are important. In ADF Ritual there are usually two vessels on the altar that represent the waters of Life—one vessel has whiskey, and the other has water.

In a large, well-attended ritual gathering, it is generally more practical to asperse the crowd from the chalice or horn after the Presiding Druid has lifted the vessel to accept the blessings. Another means of celebrating the Waters is to "pass the horn" or chalice among the participants in the ritual for everyone to accept the blessings internally by ingesting the liquid. This gives the ritual participants the feeling of receiving the Waters by ingestion, and it gives the participants the option of the whiskey or water. Lastly, a terrific means of celebrating the Waters of Life is to receive the blessings of the Gods into the two decanters holding the whiskey or water. The Presiding Druid lifts up the decanters to receive the blessing into the vessels, dis-

tributes chalices, cups, or horns to the ritual participants and distributes the Waters into each cup. At this point everyone holds his or her drinking vessel up, and “seals the deal” with the Sacred Toast, ingesting the Waters and receiving the blessings.

The act of Ritual itself is Oath and Sacrifice between Gods and Spirits, and the ritual participants. We make Offerings and Sacrifice to seek the blessings of the Bright Ones. We then do as has been done for centuries, and that is seal the contract with a toast. In our case, the toast is a spiritual, magical, and physical one. It is a toast that celebrates the mystery and magic of our relationship to the Kindred, and then receives their blessings through the Waters itself. In other words, through the sacrifices we make during Ritual, we receive the blessings from the Gods in return through

the Waters—this is called the Return Flow. When we drink or asperge with the waters, we receive the blessings as a gift from the Kindred.

The three examples of celebrating the Waters of Life in ADF Ritual cited in this article do not represent the only ways that ADF Groves perform this Rite. As mentioned earlier, there are as many ways to celebrate the Waters of Life, as there are ADF Groves. The main thing to keep in mind is that each Grove discovers the avenue that which best works for them through practice. In time, a particular avenue will turn out to work the best for the Grove, and the Waters will be distributed to the ritual participants--giving all who participate in the Ritual the blessings of the Gods.



Warrior Game Results

This year at Wellspring we had up to seventeen warriors competing for the national championship. Below are the top five results in each of the six games as well as the overall results. Congratulations to our returning champion! It was a great day and I am happy to report that we had up to seven woman warriors competing in the events for the most even field I have seen in the games. I hail all those who competed and can't wait to see everyone next year...and yes I am re-retired from the warrior's circle.

Seamus

Warrior's Guild Scribe /COH



Stone Throw	Archery
1) James - 33'3"	1) Anna - 6pts
2) Aethon - 31'7"	2) Dan - 5 pts
3) Donagh - 28'	3) Justin - 2pts
4) Brett - 27'2"	4) Rod - 1pts
5) Rod - 26'8"	

Stone & Peg	Foot Race
1) Ben - 4"	1) Ben
2) Brett - 4.5"	2) Aethon
3) Jessie - 1'5"	3) James
4) Bonnie - 1'6.5"	4) Justin
5) Leesa - 1'8"	5) BJ

Warrior's Circle	Bardic Challenge
1) James	1) Anna
2) Seamus	2) BJ
3) Aethon	3) Aethon
2) BJ	4) Dan
4) Craig	5) Ben

National Warrior's Guild 2007 Champion
1) Aethon 14pts
2) James 13 pts
3) Ben 12 pts
4) Anna 10 pts
5) Tie BJ and Dan 7 pts

Why Do People Leave a Church in a Huff?

By Bardd Dafydd

It's such a common occurrence that anyone who has been involved in the Neopagan community for a few years has probably seen it happen more than once: a member who was once happy and productive and contributing and pleasant, suddenly leaves the group in a dramatic manner, often writing an open letter to the other members, accusing the group (and frequently the leaders of the group) of all sorts of unacceptable beliefs and behavior. Sometimes they will convince a few other members to leave with them and they will all join a different group, or start a new one of their own. The original group is left scratching its collective head, wondering what the heck happened.

I think this sort of thing happens in many groups, but maybe not to the same extent as it does in churches. For example, the youth group I run has only had a very few kids leave in a huff in a dozen years. Rotary Clubs rarely have it happen. And Boy Scout troops almost never see this kind of behavior. But a large, established Baptist Church in peaceful Riverton, NJ was literally torn in **half** about 20 years ago when the new youth pastor got too popular (in the view of some) and not appreciated enough (in the view of others).

I suggest that religious groups are much more prone to this behavior than non-religious groups— that there is something inherent in the very nature of religious practice that tends to encourage some people to split off from their former friends and form a new, separate group, frequently in a dramatic manner. This might explain why there are only 193 or 194 countries in the world (depending on whether you count Taiwan or not), yet by 1990 there were at least 20,800 (that's twenty THOUSAND, plus eight HUNDRED) different Christian Protestant denominations in the world. All of them have split apart from each other since 1517 when Martin Luther created the Protestant movement by splitting away from the Roman Catholic Church. That's an average of more than 42 schisms per year. And most, if not all, of these groups have split in anger.

I wonder how many groups have schismed off from ADF, since Tony Taylor and 4 other members split in 1986 to form the Henge of Keltria?

Why are religious groups so prone to splitting apart? And what causes the people to become so angry about it?

My theory is that for many people, their religion is **extremely** important to them - maybe even more important than the person they are sleeping with or the job they



have. When a typical new member decides to follow a specific religious path, with a specific group, she is making a very big commitment – perhaps the most important and intimate commitment in her life. She doesn't enter into this relationship thinking it's a casual thing. She expects to be in the group for a long, long time - probably forever. Perhaps for Eternity.

But then, inevitably, something happens that she doesn't quite like. Of course we know that's inevitable because nothing in this world can be perfect, but maybe she thought **this** group was. Perhaps she was so excited about finding a group of like-minded people, that she fooled herself into thinking this group was different - it was just right for her. She had 'come home' at last. She really loves most of the people in this church. They are truly wonderful! And the leader of the group is amazing – so spiritual and perceptive. So she becomes active, involved, committed – everything's great!

So when that first little problem crops up, she doesn't like it, but she is likely to try to ignore it and pretend it doesn't exist. But then several other things happen. These could be anything: the leader says or does something that she doesn't entirely agree with, or another member isn't as friendly as she would like, or her idea isn't accepted at a meeting, or someone proposes a small change in the By-laws she doesn't support, or perhaps someone kisses someone else and she doesn't approve. Minor things like that. But they add up. They sit in the back of her mind and accumulate.

Or maybe she meets a guy who belongs to a different church across town, and he tells her how great his church is and how nice all the members are, etc. She visits and feels especially welcomed. They seem to appreciate her

more than the other group does.

However it happens, at some point our member starts thinking maybe it's time to leave. But she has made a serious commitment to this church. She swore an oath. She expected to be buried by these people. How can she leave them now? Doesn't that make her a quitter, or worse, an oath-breaker? Doesn't that make her a bad person?

Yes, it does - unless she can convince her self she is escaping from a **bad** group! If she can collect enough evidence that the group, or its leader, is really bad, or unethical, immoral, etc., it's much easier to leave. Not only that, she can leave with a satisfying air of self-righteous superiority, which always feels **so** nice. In fact, given how evil they are, she owes it to herself to escape before she is personally contaminated by their immoral influence. So she grabs hold of some little thing and inflates it until it's big enough to justify her leaving in a huff. (If it takes a little longer, she leaves in a minute and a huff.)

And to prove to herself that she had no choice, she starts to marshal her arguments that spell out exactly how wicked and misguided the group is, or the leader is, or the 'Sub-Committee to Decorate the Church for the Strawberry Social' is. She tries these arguments out on a few of her closest friends and refines them until they start to sound pretty convincing. Now she really wants to share these thoughts with others, because that will show everyone that she's no quitter, she's not an oath-breaker, in fact **she's** the one who finally saw through all the deception and now sees things for what they are. She is not only justified in leaving, she's obligated to. And perhaps because of her eloquent reasoning, other people will see things as clearly as she does and leave with her. That would be nice, because there **are** a few decent people in that rotten, stinkin' church that she would really miss.

So she begins to compose a letter....



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Dirtues in Times of Need

By Anna Messinger

The day before the Three Cranes Grove Imbolc rite, my housemate Ashley and I spent hours cleaning up Oakland. We hand-washed the dishes, scrubbed down the counters, organized the fridge, vacuumed, and mopped; Ashley spent an hour cleaning out her turtle tank and I spent an hour making sure my room was clean. I dusted, shook out rugs, cleaned my closet, and otherwise made the Kindred welcome. I felt deep in my soul that few things are nicer than a good spring cleaning to usher in a good new spring.

But then something happened later that night that I did not anticipate. After running a number of productive errands, including one to fix my faltering Internet, I had intended to sit down and quietly work through my essay on Imbolc before I headed out. That night I was going to go to a mellow party, enjoy good company, and return home early, only to continue working on homework and see if I could go to sleep early.

Or at least, that's what I thought.

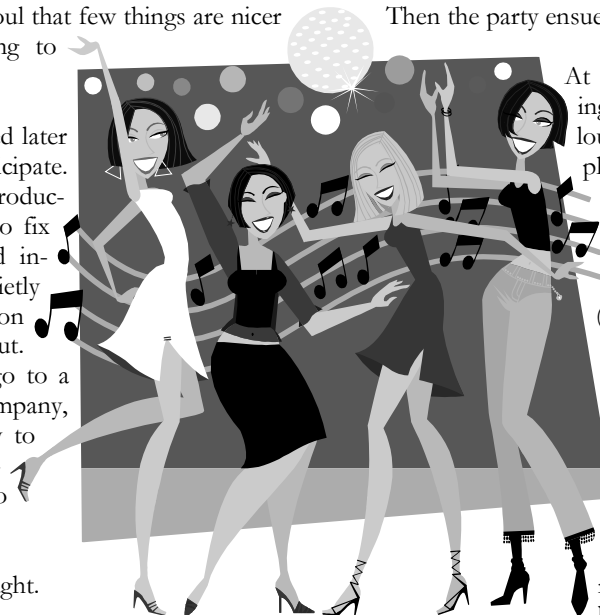
Sometime around 7 o' clock Anji burst into the house with five fraternity boys in tow. Blinking, I stood up to greet them and sat back down to my essay, hoping they would go away quickly to whatever party they were prepped for. Unfortunately, that party turned out to be ours. Anji soon made it clear that they would all be spending the night, and I felt a slow anxiety rising in me as I considered the implications. Would they be gone before tomorrow? And would they trash the house tonight?

I really should have talked to Anjali about Imbolc sooner. Anji, however, is never home. She also has never had a party at our house before, so I had no reason to assume that would happen. Weifei and Ashley knew that I expected visitors from Shining Lakes Grove of Michigan the next day, and they knew that I intended to keep the house and myself clean in order to welcome them (and Brighid.)

Anji, however, had no idea – I was forced to try to explain this to her while we clustered in her room helping her pick out party clothes. I felt slightly embarrassed at first, as I am very unaccustomed to talking about religion with her, and it was made three times as awkward by the fact that I

had to bring it up in the middle of an exceedingly inappropriate conversation. But it definitely needed to be said; even though my hopes of having the house clean and empty for the SLUGs had long since begun to wither, I figured I might as well ask. Anji said the boys would likely be gone, but no promises were made.

Then the party ensued.



At first I ignored the party, attempting to work on my Imbolc essay. But loud music and the sounds of people playing drinking games drowned out my thoughts. I was eventually coaxed out into one of the wildest parties I have ever attended, let alone been partially a hostess (or witness!) to. In between the beer bong and body shots things got so out of hand that I actually had to escape to my room for a moment, both to clear my physical vision and my mental vision.

Did I really want to let myself get drunk with the hard liquor they were drowning in? Did I really want to accept any of the blatant invitations for sex or otherwise? What about just sleeping with a man in bed, did I even want to do that? Outside there were too many hands trying to touch me and push me toward situations I didn't want to be in. Outside there were too many beverages that threatened to make my will sickly and weak.

This was the first time I ever truly experienced an ethical conflict regarding religion. I have thought about ethics extensively and there have been times I have called them into question, but never have I had to seriously re-examine my social behavior in such a spiritual light. It seems that ritual activity, high days, and parties of this nature have never before collided, and therefore I was almost completely at a loss about what was or was not acceptable to me.

Mainly the issue at hand was purity. Before a ritual, I believe it is an important sign of respect to maintain purity, which is why on the morning of a high day celebration I pay careful attention to my behavior. I make sure that I am rested, but I never oversleep, nor do I eat anything before a ritual that is not nourishing and natural. I take a long

ritual shower, I sing, I clean my room and environment, and generally establish peace and invitation in my heart for the Kindred. Often, I go early to the site to hike. But this is only the day of, not the day before.

This is why I perhaps had such a difficult clash of conscience. Because I am working on spiritual discipline, I am increasingly trying to prepare more for high days, which means that I've realized I cannot approach them like simple 'day-of' events. They are entire processes, entire turnings in the Wheel of the Year. The gods do not treat them like isolated events and neither should I. Just as I feel them approaching and increase my awareness to their symbolism/associations proportionately, so should I increase my spiritual mindframe of readiness as they approach. This brings up the issue of purity and how soon in advance I should begin to prepare it.

During the party, the ritual suddenly seemed entirely too close. I knew that alcohol would stay in bloodstream for an unfortunately long time, and I did not like the idea of greeting Brighid with poison in my system. I could have refuted drinking that night entirely, then, but the rest of me held a conflicting opinion – I do not consider alcohol to be an evil thing, nor do I consider it to be 'impure.' In fact, alcohol is something we frequently offer to the gods. So why not live it up and finish the rum? And while we're at it, why not take one of these hopeful young men into my bed? Sex is a sacred and wonderful thing, very appropriate for celebrating a high day, and it would not damage my pre-ritual purity at all if I approached it in this spiritual mind-frame. In fact, I rather like the idea of sex before a high day.

So where do we draw the line?

Suddenly I found myself standing in the dark of my room in front of my altar. I smelled powerfully of the coconut rum that had been spilled all over me earlier, and my hands were sticky with Jaegger and some other concoction I had just cleaned up. My hips were damp from the sweat of a drunkard's palms, and my hair was disheveled from having been unexpectedly tousled by somebody else's hands. I did not feel guilty, ashamed, or dirty... but I felt like I was getting there bewilderingly fast.

I closed my eyes and tried to identify the unspoken taboo that was holding me back. What was too much? What was causing that uneasy feeling of standing on the edge? It wasn't my general behavior that I was worried about, so much as my behavior in the context of my gods, my behavior in the context of a morality I hadn't even realized existed. My 'purity' felt severely jeopardized but I could not identify by what.

I in fact did not find an answer to my questions that night,

but simply washed myself up, cleaned the kitchen, and slipped off to bed with my door locked soon afterward.

It was only in typing this that I realized the real way to violate purity is to violate virtue.

Look, for example, at my discomfort with alcohol. I like alcohol and I do not feel it is wrong for me to consume it, but I draw a sharp line between acceptable and unacceptable usage when it comes to getting drunk off of it. I have never been drunk and I do not intend to get drunk any time soon, but I think I realized at the party that even without participating in the vodka-boning or anything I was still dangerously close. That's when moderation unexpectedly stepped in and loudly rang bells of warning. My concerns about purity had nothing to do with whether or not alcohol was pure – they had to do with whether or not I could drink it without compromising virtues. Alcohol, I saw, was not the threat. The potential lack of virtue it could induce was.

Moderation, of course did not ring her bells of warning alone. Integrity soon came knocking, asking me what the hell I was doing. Moderation aside, did I not have personal convictions about maintaining self-control and a level of dignity? Did I really want to engage in behaviors that not only provided me little pleasure, but also encouraged me to stop being true to myself? Then there was also the issue of the law, which concerned me less but still deserved to be considered, and on top of all of this was the issue of casual sex. I was lying to everybody in that liquor-soaked skirt and that slinky little tank top, my body language saying, "I'm willing! Come get me!" while my ethics said, "Respect me and back the hell away." I do *not* engage in casual sex and I knew I do not do this. So why put myself in a situation where I would be tempted to behave otherwise?

From there the virtues simply snowballed. Wisdom was the voice telling me to learn from the experience and clearly define my limits. Vision was the virtue that helped me see what would happen if I continued down the current path I was on and wound up transforming into a completely different person without inhibitions like Ashley had become. Hospitality kept me anxious to clean up my house and myself to make welcome for the gods and guests tomorrow, while it simultaneously asked me to look after and entertain the current guests of Anji's party. Courage urged me to resist temptations that would have been inappropriate at the time, and perseverance helped me stand by these convictions even when they became slippery and hard to pin down. Fertility was arguably shunned, but it wasn't if you considered that this party sowed the seeds of ideas, and got me thinking about virtues so hard they all grew into an essay. And finally, piety crowned them all because it was the reason I learned this lesson in the first place.



A Spirit on the Winds: A Short Introduction to Dr. Goodman's Work

By Michael J Dangler

In 1999, I met a frail-looking woman who had come to Ohio State to give a lecture and demonstration of something she called "ecstatic body postures." I was fortunate enough to be enrolled in the class she was to lecture in, and had my first real experience with an otherworldly journey.

To anyone who has had a boring lecture, perhaps it's no queer thought that a person might experience a strange and strongly visual experience, but the thing that interested me most about the experience that day is that it was not only not boring, but also that we *shared* the experience of the demonstration. A number of us visited mountains, saw large eyes open, and many traveled far and wide. The common elements in our experience were surprising to us, but not to the lecturer.

Her name was Dr. Felicitas Goodman, author of a book called *Where the Spirits Ride the Wind* and founder and director of the Cuyamungue Institute in New Mexico. Since that lecture, her work has had a major influence on how I have seen meditation, and more importantly, how I have seen religion as a whole.

Thus it was with much sadness that I read of her passing in the paper. I had, I suppose, always taken for granted that her work had influenced others as much as it had influenced me. Now, I looked at how much it had influenced me, and how much it was influencing others, and realized that a considerable number of people who could really use the research Dr. Goodman did, and yet they've never even heard of her.

It struck me most that the work of this amazing lady has not been explored deeply within ADF, which I find surprising, especially with the number of self-described "shamans" I've met onlist and off. Goodman's work, though, is perhaps more scholarly and more scientific than the usual works on shamanism.

Because of this, I'd like to give a short introduction to her background and career, as well as a few further resources on her work. I feel that her theories and her academic writings could be invaluable to many of ADF's practicing liturgists, magicians, seers, and priests. I can't begin to delve deeply into her contributions to her field in such a limited forum, but we can discuss the basics of her work and provide further resources if it interests you.

Felicitas Goodman was admitted to graduate school at The Ohio State University at the age of 51 in 1965, major-

ing in linguistics. Her primary work was in glossolalia (also known as "speaking in tongues"), and was quite groundbreaking. She found parallels in the patterns of glossolalic speech not only across cultures, but also across languages and dialects (even non-Indo-European speakers follow these similarities). Some of the similarities are as follows¹:

1. It retains rhythmic patterns
2. It "scans" with regular accent patterns
3. Each syllable begins with a consonant
4. Each person has the same intonation pattern:
"rose to a peak at the end of the first third of the utterance unit and then sloped gradually toward the end."²

Goodman did the first real serious academic work on trance, relating early on primarily to glossolalia. Before her work (and even after some of it was published), academics firmly believed that trance did not exist at all. After submitting her first paper to a Canadian linguist, she received a response that she describes as, "the gist of which was, now, now, young lady, there is no such thing as trance, and even if it did exist, we would not want to make people unhappy by suggesting that they experienced a weird state of some kind."³

Not discouraged, Goodman continued to work on trance. During her fieldwork, she identified several conditions that she deemed necessary for personal trancework:

1. Private physical space, non-distraction
2. Expectation of non-ordinary states of consciousness.
 - ☐ The person must believe this is a normal state (i.e. that they are not crazy)
 - ☐ The person must believe it is enjoyable (i.e. the state must be approached with openness)
3. Something to assist in concentration.
 - o Singing or encouragement
 - o Breathing
 - ☐ No rhythm or patterns are necessary
 - ☐ Simply watching the breath as it goes in and out is sufficient
 - ☐ Not looking to "empty the mind" like Zen meditation . . . "emptiness" closes off the mind to ecstatic trance.
 - ☐ "In trance, the mind becomes receptive to perceptions from non-ordinary reality and no longer should remain empty."⁴
4. Rhythmic stimulation of the nervous system.

- o Goodman found this best accomplished by a percussive instrument, and favoured a gourd rattle
 - 210 beats per minute for 15 minutes with the rattle served her best.
 - 10 minutes felt "unfinished" and more than 15 left an "empty space" or caused exhaustion.

All these keys brought out an experience of trance, but through experimentation she found a wide variety of experiences. What Goodman began to aim for was commonality in experience, a way to obtain the same results traditional shamans had been obtaining for centuries in indigenous cultures. How is it, for instance, that an Australian shaman can enter a trance and fire a magical missile into his enemy? Why do Lapp shamans describe being "squeezed out" through their heads? What are they doing to find this commonality that she was missing? It was from these questions that the final piece of the puzzle fell into place:

5. Posture

- o The idea was inspired by an article by psychologist V. F. Emerson in 1972.⁵
 - This article studied changes in body function during meditation in different body positions. In particular:
 - Galvanic skin response
 - Hormone secretion
 - Blood pressure
 - Posture seems to be the key to results
 - How do you choose the postures?
 - o Look at the large bodies of ethnographic representations
 - o Some postures repeat and are common among cultures

When each person was posed in exactly the same manner (down to the degree in which their back was elevated from the floor), there emerged a sudden commonality in experience. While the Emerson article took the first steps, it was Goodman who conducted extensive experiments (university students in the 1970's were more than happy to experiment with just about anything, apparently, and were quick to volunteer).

What she found was that the magic and the experiences that we read about in the sagas and myths of our people are not impossible feats, or the imaginings of our ancestors, but they are literary representations of the processes and experiences that can be obtained by the act of positioning the body in certain ways and entering into a trance-state.

What can we take from Goodman's work? The first thing

we can take is that religion and the body are intertwined in a way that few of us ever think of. When we stand before our altars, or raise our voices in ritual, how do we position ourselves? I'm willing to bet that each person who has done ritual for a long time will have a series of actions that he or she performs for each ritual. This, of course, does not mean that you need to begin with a set of ritual motions, but most people will find motions that make them feel "religious", and each person will naturally find these motions on their own.

Taking off this same train of thought, though, we can see that it's possible that a set of ritual motions that are developed by our more experienced members might help some of our newer members to connect with the Spirits on a similar level. Sometimes, suggestions on how to stand, where to place your hands, and how far back you should tilt your head might bring someone who isn't "feeling it" a certain measure of commonality of experience.

Another thing we might consider is looking into the same forms and postures that our own ancestors represented. Sitting in the same position that Cernunnos is represented in on the Gundestrup cauldron while listening to a steady and rapid drum beat might bring about an entirely new experience, and perhaps even one that is more accurate than all the historical information that we have gathered about Cernunnos to this point.

We might also consider the creation of a series of movements and postures that could be learned as part of a later study program, made into a portion of the ceremonial magical system that ADF's Magician's Guild sometimes talks about, or even learned as part of the Daily Practice requirement in the ADF Dedicant Program.

Perhaps what we can best take out of Goodman's work, though, is that there are ways to experience the feats of the ancients, the magical work that they did, and the trances of the diviners. These things are surprisingly simple for us to attain, if we know the route to take. Goodman has given us a rough roadmap, and I think that if we work from some of her ideas, we will find many ways to attain a more powerful worship for ourselves.

Resources:

Emerson, V. F. 1972. "Can Belief Systems Influence Neurophysiology? Some Implications of Research on Meditation". *Newsletter Review*, the R. M. Buckle Memorial Society, 5:20-32.

Goodman, Felicitas D. *Speaking in Tongues: A Cross-Cultural Study of Glossolalia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1972 (ISBN:)

Goodman, Felicitas D. *Where the Spirits Ride the Wind:*

Trance Journeys and Other Ecstatic Experiences. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1990. (ISBN: 0253327644)

⁴ Gore, *Ecstatic Body Postures*, p. 7

⁵ Emerson, V. F. "Can Belief Systems Influence Neuro-physiology?"

Gore, Belinda. *Ecstatic Body Postures: An Alternate Reality Workbook*. Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Company Publishing. 1995.

Notes:

¹ Goodman - *Speaking in Tongues*

² Goodman - *Where the Spirits Ride the Wind*, p. 12

³ *ibid.*, p. 13



A prayer to Brighid in a time of violence

By Jenne Micale

Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.
Bring peace to those who hear the crack of thunder from a gun in a place of refuge, who see the
sunlight glint off its barrel.
Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.
Bring peace to those where shots are as common as the cries of sparrows, where each step on the
crumbling walk is taken with held breath and a prayer half-believed.
Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.
Bring peace to those who put the softness of their own flesh and the strength of their bone in the
path of the bullet or the blade.
Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.
Bring peace to those with the swift feet or the limping, who flee the pain of pain to preserve life.
Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.
Bring peace to those sheeted in red, the wellspring of their blood spilling words and meaning on
the ground.
Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.
Bring peace to those whose bodies are unmarred, but whose minds bear the scars of their witness.
Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.
Bring peace to those who stand confused on the shores of the Sunless Sea, their lives the
unplucked apples of the Western Isle, their farewells and jokes and love notes unsaid, unsent.
Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.
Bring peace to those whose tears bear the barge to the Otherworld, who hold memories in
shaking hands and hearts webbed with cracks.
Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.
Bring peace to those who knit limbs, who tend to souls and hearts, who offer the bread of
comfort and the milk of nurturance.
Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.
Bring peace to those who bear witness, who share the words of truth and so drive off the black
wings of silence and its carrion crow with their telling.
Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.
Bring peace to those who fire the gun and loft the grenade, to those that maim and those that kill,
so that the fire of their rage is quenched in your well's sweet waters.
Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.
Let your waters pour out with the peace of the singing brook scattering sunlight, the peace of the
roaring white-maned sea, the peace of the drumming rain and the lake ringed with reeds.
Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.
Let your waters knit wounds and quell the blaze of rage, of pain, the starless deep of despair and
the gray slate of indifference.
Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.
Let us swim in your healing waters until we know that we are all enfolded in the same sea, that
we are the sea itself, the sea coursing through the salt of our tears and of our blood, turned sweet
by your palms into the deep well of compassion.
Brighid, Lady of Healing, fill us with your peace.

A Nascent Polytheist's Provisional Way Forward

By Jason L. Cook

I've been Pagan, Druid, and Polytheistic for less than a year, so I would not presume to extend any ideas about the nature of the Sacred Kindred with the pretension that those ideas represent anything conclusive, authoritative, or even particularly meaningful. In fact, what I am hoping to set out here is not a conclusion, but rather a way of getting past a question that seems to dog a lot of us when we set foot on the path of Druidry: "What is the nature of the Gods?"

When this question is posed I often find myself scrambling for a dictionary as words like "monism", "theogeny", "panentheism", among others, pop up; don't worry, I'm not using them here; Wikipedia does a good job on them.

My personal struggle with this question was a real hurdle. I felt hobbled because I could not rationalize building relationships with or worshipping these beings when I didn't *really know* their nature. I mean, am I worshipping a particular God among many? – Is Brigit just a particular face of The Goddess? – Are all the Shining Ones just various manifestations of the Universe? – And how the heck do the nature spirits fit into it all? I was tied up in knots and I couldn't move on to other work.

Maybe others weren't as extreme a case as I was, but I suspect these questions haunt many of us. What I had to do was let go of the presumption that I could *really know*.

One analogy I kept working with was how various people may know me (or conversely the various aspects of people we may know). The way we are all seen by our workmates, spouses, childhood friends, college friends, parents, children and so forth may vary greatly and in fact could cause people to form quite distinct and perhaps erroneous opinions about who what we are like overall. So this for awhile led me to a position that perhaps the "individuals" I was seeing were in fact aspects of one being. Then I thought about it further: What about completely irreconcilable traits? Can someone be a lush and teetotaler at the same time? Can someone be lazy and industrious? Well, you might say that a person reacts differently in different situations, but that is unsatisfying. After all, when you think of someone, there is usually some consistency to their behaviors, some underlying traits or principals that define the nature of that person. And at the end of the day, I am fairly certain that there really are unique individuals in the world and all my friends, family, and co-workers are not simply manifestations of greater person. So there you are: I was a hard polytheism convert.

Then I thought back to undergrad philosophy and remembered the question of how can I be certain of any objective reality? I may just be a brain sitting in a vat on some alien planet that is being stimulated to imagine it all. And then it struck me, the question of the nature of the Kindred is analogous to the old "brain-in-vats" question and I had my own personal answer to that one! Having been convinced by a hall mate, whom I referred to as "Drinking Buddy", to sit through a presentation on this question by a member of the philosophy department one afternoon, we continued to debate it for some time, appropriately over drinks. Sometime later, with my brain deep in a vat, I came to the epiphany that the brain-in-vat question cannot provide me with any answers that will be useful to me living my life as I can only react to and interact with what I am seeing and feeling – even if those things are illusions, what does it matter as long as the cause-and effect seem consistent. (The exact formulation of this insight was something to the effect of "[Forget] it! What's it matter? I'm having another beer, 'cause another beer will taste good, even if it is only in my head.")

So, are all the gods a manifestation of one (or two)? I come down with a definite maybe and I will never know unless it wants me to. I can only know the divine in the way it chooses to present itself to me and the only meaningful response is to react accordingly. If there is a unified divine and it has chosen to interact with me in various manifestations, then there is a reason why it has chosen to do so and the best way forward is to treat each manifestation as a unique, fully realized individual being. When I offer up a beer to Pan, I'm offering a beer to Pan, not to all the gods through Pan.

The divine may be like white light which contains all the colors within it, but to paint a picture that we can see, you can't simply paint it white and say, "Well, the blues, greens, reds are there; you just have to pick them out". No, in order accomplish the picture, you have to use the individual colors themselves at least for our limited ability to perceive and make any sense of it.

In conclusion, all I am suggesting is that, if this question has you hung up and is preventing you from moving on to other work – put it aside and move on. This is an answer that we may never *really* know. And I don't think it's one we really need.



My Dedicator Oath

By Monika Butke

I performed my dedicant oath after work on the winter solstice (December 21, 2006). I began my preparations the night before, and went shopping for supplies the morning of the 21st. I planned to do a full ADF-style ritual, with my dedicant oath as the final praise offering.

Although I would not be able to begin my ritual at sunset (as I was working), I took along a handmade picture of a candle with flame in front of the bright yellow sun. When the sun went down, I was able to take a few minutes to go outside, look at my picture and then up at the sky, and speak words of encouragement for the sun's hidden journey. When I arrived home from work around midnight, I set up my altar in my bedroom, and gathered all my needed materials for my full, official ritual.

I began the ritual with three chimes, and honored both the Earth Mother and the directions with my words. As I made my way from north to east, and then south to west, I noticed that I had accidentally started speaking about north while facing east! I had a quick laugh, which helped to dissolve my tension and nervousness, and continued with the ritual. Manannan assisted me with the opening of the gates, and I could actually feel a breeze from the Otherworld flow through my altar.

For the outsiders, I honored those traditions that didn't necessarily fit within ADF's Indo-European focus (i.e., Buddhism, Kemetism, etc.). Also, I asked that all who would dissuade me from my purpose, even my negative emotions, to leave and take pleasure from a feathered pen that I offered. They remained content with this trinket during my ritual.

Next, I invited the Three Kindred, and I called in all my gods, ancestors, and nature spirits to bear witness to my oath. I offered sweet-smelling herbs, such as rosebuds, basil, mugwort, and other plants. As each member of the Kindred arrived at my "party," I could feel the room get warmer, and the energy of the ritual increase.

Finally, I invited my four patrons (two from the Celtic culture and two from the Germanic culture). First, I called for Manannan Mac Lir, who has been my patron since November 20, 2004. I spoke to him words of comfort, love, and appreciation, and I offered him an apple inscribed with his name and druid symbols, as well as half of a Guinness beer. Next, I called on Brigit, who was the first Shining One to begin a relationship with me. I spoke to her about her assistance and guidance while I work to heal others, and her inspiration in my music. I offered her



some incense and the other half of the Guinness, as well as an acapella song that I created just for her. I asked for Odin next, and spoke to him about his constant thirst for knowledge, which I hope to emulate. I offered him half of a Becks beer, as well as my dedication to create a new set of runes in honor of him. Last but not least, I called for Freya, who has motivated me to complete the dedicant's program, and who has many wonderful spiritual things planned for me. I spoke to her about honoring my oaths, and my love for her kitties. She received the other half of the Becks beer, as well as catnip and cat's claw bark for offerings.

At this moment, with everyone being called to witness my oath, I took a deep breath, and began speaking. I promised to honor my community, and each community that I travel to, as well as revere all the Kindred in all their forms. I promised to never stop learning, and to forever grow in my spirituality. And finally, I promised to help others along the path, to advise but never force another, and to fulfill my role in the ADF community (i.e., groves), whatever it may be.

When I completed my oath, I felt so full of energy and goodwill that I didn't think I could stand up for much

longer. My hands moved to my rune set, to see how everything had been accepted. For my first question (“Have you accepted my praise offerings?”), I received Ansuz, which I interpreted as both communication as a blessing, and the beginning of a magical voyage. Next, I asked if my dedicant oath had been accepted. I received Laguz, which I interpreted as fertility, and the ocean as an overflowing of blessings (I interpreted this as a particular blessing from Manannan!). Finally, I asked if the Kindred had anything to offer me, and I received Ehwaz, which I interpreted as companionship, joy, pride, boasting, and counsel from the gods.

All these wonderful omens brought both wonder and tearful joy to my soul, and I decided right then and there to meet with the gods in their own realm, and go on a trance journey for more specific guidance. I grabbed my mp3 player, put on my headphones, and started one of my drumming tracks. At first, I had a hard time relaxing, because of all my excitement. I also had difficulty reaching my “starting point,” because I realized that I had already invited the three Kindred to my apartment, so there was no place for me to meet them! Finally, as the candlelight fluttered in my room, I felt myself instantly transported to a sort of campfire, with my four patrons sitting on a log directly across from me. I was ecstatic, and quickly sat up to hug everyone.

The happiness was evident in all their mannerisms, although I was unable to see anyone’s face. They asked me what I wanted to know, and I reminded Freya that she has spoke up during the warrior’s ritual at Summerland this past year: when I have completed my dedicant program, she has more in store for me. I wanted clarification, and was told that I would be receiving a great gift, the gift of communication without words. My patrons spoke about how I had

already started learning this “instinctual language” through my counseling practice, and that they would help me to “increase my fluency.” I was stunned into silence, and blown away by the enormity of the gift.

We began to talk of more mundane things, such as my simple day-to-day problems and choices that I hoped to make in the future, when I asked what my role would be in ADF. Would I be a seer, a healer, or even a warrior? My blessings included all of these, with the purpose that I would use the knowledge gained from these roles to fulfill my primary role, that of a spiritual teacher. Again, I was completely flabbergasted, and humbled by their faith and support. At this time, I felt overwhelmed, and asked to leave their campfire. My wish was granted, and I gave hugs to all before leaving (Manannan made sure to give my butt a quick pinch!). I came out of the trance, full of the inexplicable, and ready to end the rite.

I stood in front of my altar, and gave my heartfelt thanks to all who bore witness to my oath, and the wonderful gifts that came after. I thanked my patrons and wished them goodbye, and continued giving thanks and farewells to the three Kindred and the Earth Mother. At the end, Manannan assisted me with closing the gates, and I again thanked everyone before declaring, “This rite has ended!” I feel that my ritual and oath went wonderfully, and that I would not change a single thing. I do not like to use scripts in my ritual, preferring my invocations to come

directly from my own inspiration. I believe that many Kindred witnessed this monumental occasion, and that it was accepted by all. I look forward to utilizing my new “gifts,” as well as growing in my spirituality. My dedicant’s oath was not the end of a journey (i.e., the finale of my dedicant program), but rather the turning point: I am now ready for new adventures, and new abilities.



Cernunnos: Introspection and Reflection

By Aicerno O'Cathasaigh



What first drew me to Cernunnos? When or where did it happen? I ran across the name in a book, probably one by D.J. Conway, somewhere around 1998. The name itself was inconspicuous, the description more so... but the image was what struck me, more than either of the other two items provided. After reading Ted Andrews' book on creating a magical name, the name that occurred was Aicerno — the "A" from my birth-name, and the "Cerno" from Cernunnos. What I didn't know then, is the path that such a name would lead me on, or what I would discover about that particular deity.

I am a stag of Seven Tines²

In my work with Him, this particular line was brought up in one of our many discussions; and refers to a Stag who has, in hunter parlance, a "fourteen point rack." And more particularly, that there is a meaning for said tines upon the rack, and can be found in the ogham as to the nature of the deity in question. On looking at the image of Cernunnos, using the Gundestrup cauldron icon as a sample image — each antler holds seven tines branching out to the left, and seven tines branching out to the right. Huath is the ogham on the left-tines, while beith is the ogham on the right-tines, and thus repeated seven times over. Again, looking to the Irish legends, it was in such manner that Lugh was forewarned of his wife's abduction—some variation as to whether beith was repeated seven times, while drawn on a birch rod, or just ogham in general drawn on a birch rod — and here is what is said of beith and huath:

Beith: First of all hands to clutch the heavenly bole,
The gray-clad youngling seeks high learning's goal.
A cloak of feathers with a bell-hung rod,
He seeks to merit where his elders trod.³

Huath: Through terror, ancient heroes came again,
Unapprehending of the danger or the pain.
By white blossom, smiling as she stood,
The maiden welcomed them to their souls good.⁴

And when the two branches are combined together, they form Ailim:

Ailim: What birth-cry calls out first when we take life?
Each echo is the answer to its strife.
The tallest guardian of a windy plain,
Calls loudly to the easing of all pain.⁵

Walker between the worlds

Cernunnos is an interesting deity to work with, and an enjoyable one too. He is one who dwells in the in-between, a guide for the living and the dead; an emissary between the realm of nature and humanity. While not a creator-type deity, when angry, he has aspects of the Old Testament Yahweh, combined with Shiva in that latter deity's destroyer mode — and Cernunnos makes the two afore-mentioned deities appear nice in comparison. The common association of Him as a Lord of the wild beasts or of fecundity and wealth in the popular and academic literature is not entirely incorrect.⁶ But at the same time, it is not entirely correct either, as they leave out other aspects of His nature.

The torc is an interesting aspect — in the vision of Cernunnos given to me; the torc is made of two materials, silver and gold. One of his aspects is that of a Celtic-equivalent to Cronos, a keeper of time. In a discussion of the Wheel of the year for the Samhainn lore meeting, Eric Canali suggested that the Celtic year was fashioned in a torc-shape; beginning with the Winter solstice, and ending at Samhainn. Reflecting on this association, there is something else to consider. In recalling the four traditional holidays of the Celtic year: the torc-year begins with the festival of Brigantia in late January/early February, and ends in late October/early November with the festival of Samhainn, while the solstices and equinoxes hold minor relevance within that society. Still, in looking at the archaeological evidence such as elements like Newgrange and Stonehenge; the solstices and equinoxes are impor-

tant, because in knowing when each falls, thus allows one to begin the preparations for the next set of festivals. To wit: the winter solstice marks the mid-way point between Samhainn and Brigantia, and when it falls, the preparations can then begin for the Brigantine festivals.

The colours of the torc are also important, as the gold represents the cycles of the sun through the year, and the silver represents the cycles of the moon. They twist and wend around each other as the year goes by, and mark their passage through the change of the seasons.

The Beginning



Cernunnos' icons began back before the gods were named. The first image is that of the deer-man, the shaman of Trois Freres, a Neolithic cave painting in France. In those days, he was keeper of the world tree, that which the Norse call Yggdrassl. Where did the shift come? At some point, whether it was through his own desire to ensure the safety of the world-tree, or through the concern of people, new keepers of the world-tree were established; the three Norns or fates. In looking at it, one may wonder perhaps at why this change occurred, but in looking at Cernunnos when in his destroyer mode, it would be challenging, given the other things eating away at the world tree, to have to protect it from oneself.

As time advanced, Cernunnos grew more defined, becoming a walker between the worlds. He is an in-between god and one of the underworld, a guide to those who wander through the twilight realms. In the construction of the cauldron of Gundestrup, one may get to know all of the aspects of Cernunnos from the images contained therein.

The Iconography of Cernunnos⁸:



When discussing Cernunnos' role as a master of animals, this is the most commonly referred to icon of his. The stag in the image has several functions, of which the first relates to the line from the poem, "The Song of Amergin"; while another is to act as a physical representative for the god when he incorporates into the physical world. The third function of the stag is that Cernunnos pits himself against himself, in exchange for the hand of the goddess of the land and sovereignty each year at the changing of the season: the first battle bringing on the harbinger of spring, the second bringing on the harbinger of winter. At the same time, it also shows his balancing between being the hunter—portrayed by the wolf — and the hunted — portrayed by the bull and stag.

In the new icon that I was requested to make for him, that being a spirit statue — what the Egyptians refer to as a "Ka statue" — In the shape of a deer, whose body is carved from a solid block of ebony, with crescent-shaped antlers with seven tines on each antler that are made from cast gold. I was concerned, having witnessed his temper, about what might happen if such a statue was made, and a hunter later encountered a black deer in the woods and shot at it. There would be some terrible ramifications for the person who fired the shot. Granted, it would be an irony in keeping with the balance Cernunnos strikes between the hunter and the hunted, but as a priest of his cult I believe the safety of the people is as important as honoring him. I try to find my own balance between these two aspects of the role of a priest of Cernunnos, which I've either taken on, been guided into or fallen into (or some combination of the above).

Continuing with the images from the icon above, a more appropriate way of interpreting the scene is as representing a human who maintains a balance and equilibrium in the dance of life and death. Where the natural is in accord with humanity, but each maintains their proper perspective, wherein all creatures — human and others — are neither hunted nor hunter, yet both; embracing the dichotomy rather than fearing it.

Cernunnos as keeper of the Cauldron:



The next of the icons is the role of Cernunnos as keeper of the cauldron as seen in the above picture from the Gundestrup — though possibly 'keeper of the cauldron' is not quite the most accurate way to describe the scenario. In the image, the main personage is taking the people and placing them head-first into a bin. There are two rows of people, the lower one walking towards the main person, and the upper level walking away from the figure¹¹. This scene can be interpreted in many ways, but my view is that it is Cernunnos in his role of the guide of the dead (the figures in the bottom row) placing them into the cauldron or bin, sends them towards the next stage of their life — reincarnation. At the same time, he also takes the living and guides them towards the next stage of their afterlife upon death. The bottom row is the living and the dead moving towards the cauldron through which they will be reborn in the next phase of their existence. Cernunnos is the guide, the mediator.

Afterthoughts and Reflections:

I have been working with Cernunnos since I first joined Sassafras Grove, in 1998, but it was relatively recently that I began my work with him in earnest, since returning from Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. From what I have seen of Cernunnos he is not easily angered, but when it happens the anger burns hot and slow. A good analogy would be a volcanic eruption such as are seen in Hawaii — the lava flow is very much like Cernunnos when angered, though without emotion. He is a shape shifter, dark god, horned god. The point has been argued that Cernunnos is an enigmatic deity, somewhere betwixt and between. To a point, this is true; save that he reveals himself as he will to those who will listen. In seeing him, mayhap one can get a better understanding of their own self as they wander the mists between the world of spirit, the physical, and the mental.

His feast day falls at 2:13 AM on the 10th of December.

While it is a repeat of the above items, the following is a more personal letter of exhortation written not too long ago to Cernunnos:

A sleepless night and many thoughts
And the sounds of U2 echo through the air
And one wonders how they get anywhere.

The visions come fast and furious,
Day after day, thickening like sourdough

Whence am I to go, running to and fro?

The poetic niceties to be observed, going through doors
and saving souls.

Protecting humankind from one of the oldest of gods, and
feeling my brain turn to heated mash. And yet giving access
to the same.

Conversations within my head, and visions of Italy and
Rome. Harry Potter with Satan's face to turn away from
such distraction

Sounds are ringing in my ear, while nearby stalks a black
deer
Whose golden antlers do adorn, fourteen points in all.

Beith on the right, huath on the left, the ogham doth
speak his nature.

Walker-between-the-world of Nature and Man

Walker-between-the-world of Living and Dead

Guide of ALL SOULS

Keeper of Time and the Year, bearer of the torc of Silver
and Gold; knower of the sun and moon's cycle sharing,
moving bold.

Shiva the Destroyer and Yahweh combined in one, when
temper flares and anvil stricken by hammer and tong.

Watching the massing throng, as You dip them into the
Cauldron; some going where You shall lead them, others
being sent on Shamanic journeys pendent upon whether
they come to you living or dead. Keeper of the Gateway.
The image upon the gundestrop, are all aspects of You.

Dark Lord, Stag Lord; Keeper of the Mysteries, bearer of
the Serpent of Hidden Knowledge. Redeemer, Sacrificer,
He Who Fights Himself with Himself as the Stag for the
Hand of the Goddess of the Land and Sovereignty at the
turning of the year; once in Spring for coming of summer,
once in fall for coming of winter.

I came unto You not know what I was taking as my name as I began my studies of Druidry. I feel I am what I am because of your guidance, since I was born. Vision given, gift accepted; Though at first refusing to make your icon, we both knew I would accept, at what price to my family or other possibilities; creator, destroyer. My mother fears what will happen to me; I know I can trust you. I have seen you angry and stood before you, refused you and accepted the challenge, can I do any less? Still though, and while I seem to speak with arrogance, it is you who gave me the comfort to speak as I do before you and the rest of the gods. You mediated between us after the first attempt at the Phoenix Rite. I know the debt I bear you, and while sometimes I may not move as fast as you like, I do my best — mortal though I am — to do as you wish. I know how to neither carve wood nor cast metal, nor where I would get the quantities necessary for the icon you desire. Also I know what, courtesy of the vision given, what would happen should a hunter shoot your spirit form traveling through the forest; irony that might be, but a grim one for you would chase them through the darkness unto the ends of the universe and their soul would know no peace and even Yahweh himself would be hard-pressed to torment the soul as you would.

As a priest and dedicant to you, I too walk between the worlds of nature and human, of the living and dead; but as a living man and priest, it is as much my responsibility to protect my tribe and flock while serving as intermediary between you and them. I am coming to learn that it is a heavy burden being a priest, druid, and chieftain; as well as maintaining the separate reality apart from my work therein.

Bibliography:

1. Image is taken from my public signature profile at the OBOD message boards, and is representative of the icon commonly associated with Cernunnos, taken from the Gundestrup cauldron.
2. This line is from the Irish Poem, "Song of Amergin."
3. Matthews, Caitlín, *Celtic Wisdom Sticks: An Ogam Oracle* guide book (London: Connections Book Publishing, 2001), 42.
4. Matthews, 52.
5. Matthews, 72. There are other possible combinations of ogham that could be used to interpret the tines on Cernunnos' antlers, in the beith column, and Huath column. Suffice it to say, that Cernunnos' icons may be an example of what is described in the Aurecept Na N-eces' (The Scholar's Primer), as animal ogham rather than "Tree ogham" as is commonly known, courtesy of his image as the stag-man, with certain shared attributes between the two.
6. Fickett-Wilbar, David. *Cernunnos: Looking a Different Way*, 1.
7. <http://www.d.umn.edu/~tbacig/writing/Ancestors/protocelt/Images/Sorcerersm.jpg>
8. Images provided courtesy of google.com
9. <http://www.literatur.li/kelten-blues.htm>. This is the example referred to earlier in associating Cernunnos as animal-ogham, and source for interpreting him as Master of animals in some of the more popular literature. Image originally from the Gundestrup cauldron.
10. From the Gundestrup cauldron, <http://www.livingmyths.com/Img/Celtic/Gundes.jpg>
11. www.livingmyths.com/Celticmyth.htm



ArchDruid Letter, Con't

Continued from page 2

This round of speakers finished with a talk by Caroline W. Casey, who is a Visionary Activist Astrologer and Radio Host. She talked about the state of Pagan religious rights in general.

The main section of the rally was a magical working led by Diana Paxson, to bring the spirit which our country was founded on - that of religious freedom for *ALL* - into the minds of all Americans, and to invoke the spirits of the founding fathers of the country to guard those freedoms.

In closing, there were about 225 people in the crowd attending the rally and about 78 people in the circle for the magical working. It was well received by everyone in attendance and we had very good comments about it from the National Park service, who are in charge of the park and were in constant attendance. A copy of the speech I gave can be found on my website along with a page on the history of our struggle to gain recognition for the Druids' Awen symbol – <http://www.dragonskeep.us>.

Bright Blessings,
Rev. Skip Ellison

Living a Spiritual Pagan Life

By Lesley Gary

Every thing that we do has a purpose. How many things do we do, though, out of habit? We wake up, go to work, go home, eat dinner, and wake up and do the whole process again over again day after day. It is as if our world is on cruise control 24/7. We push ourselves to the limits beyond belief. We carry all our burdens on our shoulders. But where is the Goddess or God in this? Where is the faith that we have? Where is the spiritual life?

Everyday there are many things that we can do to invite our path into our life. It is our responsibility to invite the spirituality into our life! It is just as important to go to our Deities when things are good, as it is when things are at their worst. We must know this and do this!

Think of it this way: if you only hear from those that you love when they need help or upset, would you still want to hear from them? NO! You want to hear about the good times more than the negative. Our deities want to hear the positive, help with the negative, and know that they are important. They were never meant to be a quick fix to problems.

There are several things that we can do in our lives to help us become stronger in our faith, stronger in our bond with our deities, and stronger in our love for life. When including these into our lives, we will find at least three results: first, a more positive outlook on life; second, more energy; and third, a more fulfilling life. But I believe that the most important thing that you will find is a stronger faith and bond with your deities.

Now you must be wondering, how do I get that? How do I get up and love life? How can I have a more spiritually fulfilling life? There are several exercises that you can include into your everyday life. So what are they?

We must start with waking up. When you wake up, do you just wake up, or do you make a conscious effort to say that it will be a good day? This is very important! When you wake up, you must decide that it will be a good day. Everything in life is a choice, whether we acknowledge that or not. We choose to be positive, we choose to see the positive, and we choose to only let the positive be around us.

One thing that is very important to do at this time is to thank your Deities for the new day. Just speak out loud or think your thoughts. Let them know that you are appreciative of the new day and ask for their guidance in the day. Let them know how you truly feel!

Now that you have woken up and chosen that it is a good day, what's next? You have to get out of bed! If you lie in bed all day or even a small bit of time, you will feel blah all day. Also, if you are married or with someone, tell them that you love them and kiss them. Get up, go to the restroom. Choose what to wear for the day. (Remember when choosing clothes to choose ones you feel good in, and that are not dark and dreary.)

Once you have that done, take a shower. When showering, imagine that it is cleansing all of you and removing all negativity. Imagine that it is your Deities love that is flowing on you. Meditate on the good things in life and set your goals of the day. After your shower, get dressed. Now fix your hair and finish whatever else you need to do to leave the house. Make sure that you look your best; this will help you feel your best!

Now you leave for work. Make sure that through the day, you compliment people. People love to know that they are appreciated and that they are doing good jobs. They also like to hear that they look good, have been nice, or are otherwise noticed in a positive way. You maybe asking, though, "What about my work?". Do the best job that you can. Do it quietly and with out looking for rewards — this way, when they come it feels more fulfilling!

Ok, you are done with work and on the way home. During the drive, think about your life. Look at the things in it that would not be there if it were not for a Higher Power. Give thanks to your Deities. Also, take your time. I know that you are tired and just want to get home. But stressing over traffic is a needless action. Do the speed limit. You will get home and not feel stressed, angry, or any of those other things that come when you frantically try to speed thru town, get to where you think you need to be, and rush life.

Now that you are home, do things that relax you. Read a good book, watch a movie, work in the yard, cook, do what ever it takes to enjoy the rest of the day. If you have kids, sit with them during homework time and help them. Then play with them! If it is just you and a loved one, then take a walk together or choose another activity that includes the both of you. Through this you are strengthening the bonds with your family!

Now, the day is over. When you get ready to lay down, thank the Deities for the day. Tell them what you enjoyed most about it. Tell them what was good. Then let them

know who needs healing in your life, your concerns, and the negative things in life. You can accomplish doing this two different ways; tell them or write them a letter. I have a Deity journal: I write letters to the ones that I follow and tell them everything that stuck out through the day. I like this because in the future, I can look back and see how my life has changed.

If you have noticed, I have left out a few things. I did not talk about eating. Every time you fix food, begin to eat, or have a snack; thank the ones that you follow! Ask that they bless the food for you and your family. Do not waste any, and eat healthily! But, there are plenty of other reads about that and exercise.

Some of those that read this may be thinking, "This does not sound like a Pagan!" But who says what one sounds like or does? There is more to life than only casting a spell when you need some thing or only doing to a rite at the holidays. If you honestly let the Deities into your life in the good times and bad times, if you honestly let the spiri-

tual be what it is all about, you will learn an inner peace.

I am not saying that there will not be hard times. There will always be those, you just choose to handle them differently and deal with them in a whole new manner. Forget looking for the silver lining, look for the gold! Remember life will always get better! Remember that there is no wrong or right way to live spiritually. You are in charge of your choices. Are you going to have faith or not? Are you going to truly celebrate the holidays, or use them for an excuse to party? Is life always going to be negative, or is it going to be fulfilling and a blast? It is up to you to choose how to live life, not any one else! It is up to you to choose to add things into your life that will be positive and help you or not! Blessed Be!



Bungee Cord Two Powers

By Bert Kelher

"Begin, o seeker of wisdom with your breath." Then the roots go down into the earth seeking the really nice cavern, kind of a long way that. Then you have to look up and find your very own star and grab some of that energy as well. Oh yeah, don't forget those cauldrons that need filling. By now it's next Thursday, and you have forgotten why you started this in the first place.

Ok, not really. I love the Two Powers. I use it all the time. (Thought I was going to knock it, didn't you.) In rituals both private and public and whenever I need to find my center and have the time, and there is the crux. The time. A full-blown Two Powers meditation takes a while, sometimes longer than I have. You know the kind of time I am talking about. You are about to blow-up at the boss, the kids, the spouse, the co-worker, or whoever. There really isn't time to find a comfortable spot to sit, mind the breathing and fire off the full version.

So what is a modern-day, stressed-out Druid to do? Simple. Grab your patent pending, low calorie, all natural Two Powers Bungee Cord™. Everybody has seen one of

these before. They are stretchy in the middle, a hook on each end. If you grab the ends of a long one and pull, the middle goes **BOING!** Vibrates back and forth and then goes still. This is the mental image that needs to be

grabbed onto. Take your work-a-day, stressed out Druid brain and grab onto that patent pending, low calorie, all natural Two Powers Bungee Cord™. (In case you haven't figured it out already, the cord in this visualization, not really for sale.) Take one of the hooks and mentally send it down, down, down, until it grabs onto some of that good old Chaos. Take the other hook and up it goes until it snags some of the cosmic order. When the hooks grab onto these two powers (Two Powers) picture the forces coming towards the middle and meeting. **BO-ING!** The middle of the cord will vibrate

back and forth, less and less until it becomes still. As the order and chaos mediate each other, picture your stress leaking away until, when the cord is still, the stress is gone.

Or the super simple version goes: Down, Up, **BOING!** Ahhhh.



Mead Made Simple

By Illious

What is mead? That is a question I surprisingly get by a few veteran Neopagans and not surprisingly get from many new ones. Mead is arguably the oldest of all fermented beverages. We honestly have no idea when it first appeared, but there is archaeological evidence that it was made at least 5000 BCE, and it can easily be believed that it is older than that.

What exactly is mead? Well, the most basic definition is a fermented beverage that uses honey as the majority of the fermentable sugar. Yes, I know, that is a very broad definition, so let's narrow it down into the four general kinds of meads.

First we have our straight meads. The ingredients allowed to make these are honey, water, and yeast. When making these, all your color, flavor, and aroma comes exclusively from your honey. There is a subcategory of straight meads where you use a honey from one flower source, this is called varietal honey, and hence we have varietal meads.

If we use this straight mead as our basic mead, we can then add all kinds of things to it. If we add things to the mead that do not add any sugar (adjuncts) then we have what's commonly referred to as spiced meads. The proper term is *metheglin*. Common adjuncts that are used in various combinations are ginger, lemon, rose petals, hops, vanilla, chocolate, coffee, peppers, etc.

So, if instead of adding just adjuncts, we add fruit juice to the mead, we now have what is commonly known as fruit mead. The proper term is *melomel*. This is in essence a combination of wines and meads. As long as you have the majority of your sugar coming from the honey, it is this, otherwise it's a variety of wine. You can use any kind of fruit juice you want, and many have been used throughout the years. The most popular ones commercially are grape (pyments) and apple (cysers).

We have now made a wine and mead combination, how about a beer and mead combination? Those are called *braggots*, as long as the majority of your sugar comes from honey and not the malt. Braggots can be hopped like beers, or they can be unhopped. They can be light, but most are dark. If you can find one of these commercially, try it. From my experience, they are not commonly found outside of brewpubs.



Now that we know what mead is, let's brew a small batch. Here is what you need to make a 1 gallon batch:

- Large pot with lid (1 gallon minimum)
- Spoon
- Funnel (if possible)
- 2 milk jugs
- Tin foil
- 2-3 lb of honey
- 5-10 raisins
- Water
- Wine or Champagne yeast (not bakers yeast)

First a note on honey. It's highly recommended that you find honey from a local beekeeper or a local homebrew shop. The "bears" you can buy in the grocery store tend to be more than just honey, often containing corn sugar or other non-honey sweeteners in them. They also may contain preservatives which are detrimental to fermentation.

Take approximately ½ gallon of water and start heating it in a pot that can handle at least twice that amount. To

this, add your honey with stirring. If you want a dry mead, use less honey (2lb/gallon), if you want a sweet mead, use more (3lb/gallon). Bring this all to a boil. Be careful, this can boil over and be a big pain to chisel off of the stove. If foam forms on the top, this is just proteins and impurities from the honey. I personally remove the foam, but you can keep it in. Removal will give you slightly clearer mead. Boil for ten minutes and then turn off the heat. Put the top on the pot, and allow it to cool. You can do this by putting it into a tub of cold water, put into the refrigerator, or just letting it cool on the stove.

While this is cooling, sanitize your milk jug. Take a cap full of bleach and put it into the milk jug. Fill the jug with water and shake. Rinse the jug until you can no longer smell the bleach, and rinse two more times. Cover the jug with a fresh piece of tin foil. If you are paranoid about sanitation (like most brewers) you can sanitize the foil too.

Once the honey-water (must) is cool to the touch (under 80 °F), pour into the milk jug, add clean water to raise it up to approximately 2/3 to 3/4 of a gallon (right below where the top bends in). Shake this up well to aerate the must, add your raisins and yeast and cover with foil again. Instead of foil, you can use a sanitized balloon as another method to keep stuff out. The purpose of the raisins is to

provide nutrients for the yeast to use. You can use commercially available yeast nutrients instead if you desire. If you want sweet mead, use a wine yeast, if you want dry mead, use a champagne yeast. Let the fermentation happen at room temperature (ie leave it in a closet, in a heated basement, etc. just don't let it get below 60 or above 80). After 24 hours, there should be fermentation going on. Be aware that the jug may ferment so vigorously that it may spill over.

Once this vigorous fermentation is over (2-4 weeks), carefully decant your mead off the solids on the bottom and into a new, sanitized milk jug. Raise this to almost a full gallon with clean water, and cover again with tin foil (or balloon). Let it continue to sit at room temperature to age. Meads are commonly aged for a total of one year like wines. The best way to know when it's done is to just taste it. When it tastes good, you can again, decant the liquid off the solids into a new, sanitized milk jug or other bottle (20 oz soda bottles work well), chill, and serve.

Cheers!



A Sonnet to Sky and Earth

by Brandon Newberg

May we ever pay to mother earth
And father sky the debt as guests we owe?
A pinch of cornmeal flies upon the turf
Returning but a portion they bestow:
A little gift--how little may redress!--
Before we too are flung upon the grounds,
And yet they take in us their happiness,
For we provide a hostel for their rounds:
Our feet receive as guests the waters deep,
Our limbs above receive the sky-born fires,
And by this very patronage we keep
Our hosts, and host them in our mortal byres.
In us the sky and earth may take their rest,
And even so we honor gift for guest.

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Collections for the local food bank

We will be collecting canned or nonperishable goods to be donated to the Lord Fairfax Area Branch of the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank ~~~ <<http://www.brafb.org>>

Tales from the Sídhe

By Brian Farnell, Tiffany Rice, Hallowed Oaks Grove



In Loving Memory of Kevin Rice (1953-2006)

This play is meant to be used as part of a Samhain ritual.

<**The Summoner**> *(Quietly at first, wickedly)* Gather round children and **PRICK UP YOUR EARS!**...for tonight is a sacred night and I have a lesson for you. It is a lesson in sadness and despair, anger and horror; a lesson of hope and wisdom. You may call me The Summoner, an outdweller, and I come to call the spirits of the departed. For all of you in your masks who came for a spectacle, I bring a show with a few tricks and treats. I have come here to challenge your reason and put thorns under your **precious** feet as you tread this sacred ground. This is the night, when the veil is thin, that you **say** you honor the dead so I summon them to speak to you. Let us now hear what words they would have. I call forth The Spirit of the Forgotten Dead.

Bell rings three times, fire flames and The Spirit of the Forgotten Dead enters

<**Forgotten Dead**> *(Very angrily walking around circle speaking to the crowd)*

I am The Forgotten Dead, spirit of the nameless ancestors. I am the dead you call out to in your rituals. You

think you do honor me with your token gestures, but where am I when you sing and dance and feast? **I am nowhere!** I created the roots of all that you are and all that you have and all the world. *(Suddenly grabs someone by the collar)* **What do you know of me?** *(Grabs someone else)* **What do YOU know of me?** There was once a time when my songs were sung at every gathering and every bard worth his salt knew my name and every child asked to hear my stories. **Now I am nothing!** You say you honor the old ways but you **lie**. **Where am I when you sing and dance and feast?**

Spirit of the Forgotten Dead departs

<**The Summoner**> *(Mockingly)* Imagine the ancestors angry at you! Do you not honor them at every rite? Perhaps you use their names for your own amusement and know nothing of their ways. Perhaps it would surprise you that you dishonor the dead in other ways. I call forth The Spirit of the Mourned Dead.

Bell rings three times, fire flames and The Spirit of the Mourned Dead enters

<**Mourned Dead**> *(Sorrowfully, walking around circle speaking to the crowd)*

I am The Mourned Dead. I am the father, the mother, the brother, the sister, the lover and the friend who has recently passed. You think you do honor me by mourning, but where am I when you sing and dance and feast? I am nowhere, you save thoughts of me for the other times. Where once there was only love between us, now there is nothing but sorrow. Once, golden loving rays of warmth shone from you to I. Now there is only sadness. I long to be with you once again as you long to be with me, but now you look to me down the deep well where you have placed me and your tears fall like steel arrows through my heart. Where am I when you sing and dance and feast?

Spirit of the Mourned Dead departs

<The Summoner> (*Mockingly*) Not what you expected, callous ones? Did you think the product of your sorrow was a thing of beauty? Fear not children, there is remedy and why would I torment you without a purpose? (*wicked laugh*) Let us hear from a different side. I call forth The Spirit of the Honored Dead.

Bell rings three times, fire flames and the Spirit of the Honored Dead enters

<Honored Dead> (*Walking around circle speaking to the crowd, kindly, jovially, like a favorite uncle*) I am the Honored Dead. I am the one passed on beyond the gates of death, remembered with reverence. You do not cry when you speak of me. No, you do not put me down that well of sorrow. Yet neither am I put down the well of forgetfulness like the forgotten. Where am I when you sing and

dance and feast? I am the one in all of your stories.

'A good friend once told me...'

'I remember every summer when I went to visit my grandmother...'

'One Christmas my dad decided that he...'

Laughter. Warmth. Inspiration. These things are like candles at my feet, so take heart when you honor me. Light a candle in remembrance of me and then fill your horn with mead and pass it while you tell my stories. When you sing and dance and feast I will walk beside you. When you tell these stories I live again in your heart and in the hearts of all who hear.

Spirit of the Honored Dead departs

<The Summoner> (*sternly*) Let all remember the words of the dead! Let the mourned dead be loved instead of a cause for us to weep, let the forgotten dead be remembered and let all the dead be honored! We thank you, spirits of the dead. You are free to depart us if you will, but you are welcome to join in with us on this, your sacred night. Us you say? (*slowly, threateningly*) Until this night is over I will be with you, haunting your festivities, lest you forget the lesson of The Summoner and the words of the Dead.

Bell rings three times, fire flames, The Summoner departs and the play ends



Laughing Meditation

By Brandon Newberg

Recently I stumbled upon a helpful technique in my morning meditations. I call it "laughing meditation."

Every morning I chant devotionals, but often my voice is still hoarse and cracking from sleep. So I thought maybe I should do some voice warm-ups before chanting. Never having taken music lessons and having no clue how to do it or even what a musical note is. I found myself laughing in the attempt. To make a long story short, the laughing ended up being the most useful part. Now, before I chant, I take a moment to chuckle: first normal, then higher, then lower and deeper. It warms up my vocal chords, and it also warms up my mood at the same time! It reminds me to not take things so seriously all the time.

So that's what I call "laughing meditation." It's not a bad practice, but I don't know what my neighbors think of me!





Book Review

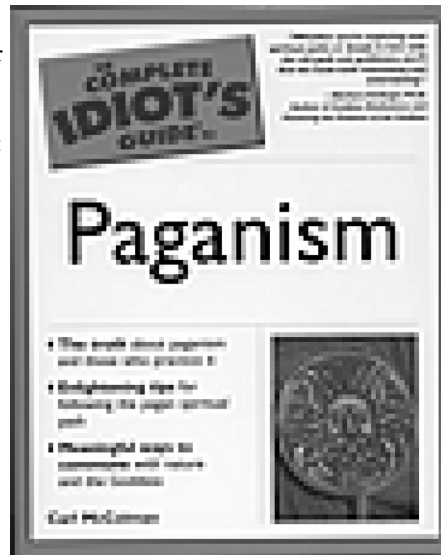
The Complete Idiot's Guide to Paganism By Carl McColman

By Robert Kelher

I debated for a long while whether or not to use this book to fulfill this requirement, as I believe that either Drawing Down the Moon, by Margot Adler, or Being a Pagan, by Hopman and Bond, are better suited as introductions to Neopagan beliefs. In the end, I decided to write this review in an attempt to make the case that this book should be either removed from the recommended reading list or come with a strong caveat.

That being said, I would like to start with parts of the book I did like. The most useful portions of the book to a person who is attempting to find an overview of modern Neopagan beliefs and practices are the two appendixes. Appendix A is a recommended reading list. The author lists over 100 books that he apparently believes are worth pursuing. I would have preferred a brief description of each title, but this is easy to come by using the Internet. I did find it amusing that he states there is no list of required reading for Pagans. (Amusing since I am reviewing his work as part of a required reading list.) Appendix B is a listing of 70 some Internet resources, many of which I would myself recommend. Each listing includes not only the URL of the site but also a brief description of what the site is. Not only was I happy to find many of the sites I know and love, but a few I may have to visit that I was unaware of.

The rest of the book claims to offer "the basic principles of shamanism, druidism, Wicca, and more." Shamanism rates a total of 13 pages. While I am not personally qualified to judge the information presented as accurate or not in this section, I am fairly sure it would take more space than this to give even a brief overview of the practice. Druidry rate 13 1/2 pages. Wow, our practices and beliefs must be slightly more complicated than those of Shamanic practitioners. The author also seems to take a dismissive attitude toward Druidry. "So if you're interested in pagan spirituality but don't think you want to put out the effort necessary to be initiated as a witch or a shaman, the path of the druid may be the right one for you." (70) Nice to know my chosen path is going to be effortless. The "and



more" rate an impressive 1 1/2 pages.

The rest of the book is steeped with, what as far as I can tell, is fairly generic Neo-Wiccan philosophy and rituals. The author makes repeated references to "The Goddess" and "The God".

While this is fine from a Wiccan duality standpoint, many Neopagans do not subscribe to this outlook. The author also claims that all Pagans subscribe to the modern interpretation of the Gaia Hypothesis. "...to pagans, the world isn't bad but is the physical manifestation of the Goddess." (77) While this may hold true for Wiccans and many in ADF, it does not accurately describe many reconstructionists, and does not

even completely apply to all within ADF. The author also on at least two occasions is explicit in his denial that any modern Pagan practices animal sacrifice. While this is true within ADF, there are modern Pagans who most assuredly engage in this particular practice. I am sure it would come as a great surprise to them to find out they are not real Pagans.

My primary objections to the text are twofold. First is that the majority of non-Wiccan groups are given a token glossing over. This would be fine in a book that is directed solely at Wiccans, but the book purports to be a guide to Paganism in general. Second, the rest of the book makes sweeping statements that lump all Pagans together into a generic Neo-Wiccan worldview. This does service to neither Wiccans, nor any other Pagan of any practice.

In my opinion, if the book is to remain on the recommended reading list, it should come with, at the least, a better description than the one in the Dedicant Program, which currently reads, "a good general introduction to the many basic forms of modern Paganism." The text does not fulfill this description.



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Volume 1: History and Lore. ISBN 1-4196-3616-2 (hardcover)
1-4196-3598-0 (paperback). Published in April 2006.

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1-4196-3614-6 (paperback). Published in July 2007.

Available from Amazon.com. Or contact the publisher, BookSurge,
at 1-866-308-6235, or customerservice@booksurge.com

For more information, visit the Troth's website at <http://www.thetroth.org/>



News and Announcements

Dedicant Program Completions

Jason L. Cook of Grove of the Other Gods,
Completed May 31, 2007
Bryan Bagnas of Coast Oak Protogrove,
Completed June 1, 2007
Annie Odinsdottir NicMorrigan, of Grove of the Other Gods,
Completed June 12, 2007
Isaura of Whispering Lake Grove,
Completed June 21, 2007
Brandon in Japan,
Completed June 27, 2007

Study Program Completions

Jenni Hunt, First Circle General Study Program,
Completed May 22, 2007
Jenni Hunt, First Circle Liturgists Guild Study Program,
Completed May 22, 2007
Jenni Hunt, First Circle Scholars Guild Study Program,
Completed May 31, 2007
Kirk Thomas, First Circle Musician (Fochloc Bard),
Completed June 4, 2007

New Protogroves

Protogrove of the Growing Oaks, ADF
West Allis, WI on March 24, 2007
Protogrove of the Shenandoah, ADF,
Royal, VA on April 10, 2007
Feather River Protogrove, ADF,
Chico, CA on May 1, 2007
Sweet Gum Protogrove, ADF,
Seabrook, TX on May 1, 2007
Green Timbre Protogrove, ADF,
Joshua Tree, CA, June 7, 2007
Oakstone Protogrove, ADF,
Port Coquitlam BC, June 21, 2007

Grove News

Coast Oak Protogrove

Coast Oak Protogrove, ADF in San Diego is making a nice collaboration in the local Pagan community by joining in unity and fellowship with local groups and shops. Regular workshops started on July 11 with the development of a series on ADF Druidry to be open to the public. The workshops will be loosely based on the DP information and invite participants to learn about Our Own Druidism.

We are also pleased to be a part of Pagan Pride this year,

15 September in San Diego, holding the opening ritual and two workshops open not only to the pagan community but the public at large. Our grove is growing with new friends and interested members. We are thankful to the Shining Ones for their guidance and the support of our leadership and fellow grove friends.

Three Cranes Grove

Over the past three months since our last report to *Oak Leaves*, Three Cranes Grove, ADF, has added three new members (a fourth is pending at this time), celebrated two High Days with three rituals, and done 14 rituals in 72 hours during a large community festival. We also raised \$100 for the local race for breast cancer and participated in the Race for the Cure.

We've kept up our normal canned good collection on top of all that, bringing in 99 canned goods (quarter-to-date) for donation to the Mid-Ohio Foodbank.

Our presence at Columbus' ComFest (short for "Community Festival") brought our name to a much wider audience than it has in years past, and we found a lot of interest in both the Grove and ADF as a whole. We expect to see more growth in the future as a result of this presence.

We have also ramped up our community outreach (we're holding an open meeting soon, and will be asking if folks would like to continue that each week) and increased our general community service, seeking to adopt three cranes from the Columbus Zoo.

These past three months have found much prosperity for our Grove, and our omens are indicating guidance, protection, breaking down barriers, and magic. The Grove is growing in strength and numbers now, as well as in commitment from our individual members. It's a good day to be a Crane.

-Rev. Michael J Dangler

Grove of the Rising Phoenix

It's been another exciting quarter for us.

We started out this quarter with our Medieval Madness mini-festival (see ad elsewhere in this newsletter for next year's festival). We had a dozen attendees this year. It was just the right size for a cozy gathering. I'm not sure some

of us will recover from the grammatical butchering that occurred at our Bardic Circle !

Early in the quarter, we went to see Archeologist Caimin O'Brien speaking on sacred sites in ancient Ireland . It was very good, and very validating. He pointed out things that we as pagans had always known.

We had our first Slavic Spring Equinox rite. It was a beautiful rite, and Paul, who wrote the ritual, even provided beautiful Pisanski eggs. We also has a youth group from one of the local Unitarian Universalist Churches attend this rite. The students asked many good questions, and hopefully learned a lot.

Our grove has been going on the Highland Game circuit; first was the Mesa Games, and then was the Verde Valley Games. Then we went to the Prescott Highland Games, and we are scheduled to attend the Flagstaff games in July.

The famous Desert Magic Festival was in April this year. We had five of our grove members attend this year. It was a wonderful time, seeing old friends and making new ones. We also had a record number of grove members, four, attending Wellspring in New York.

Our high day rituals at the Irish Cultural Center continue to go well.

Contributor's List

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"Mighty Driftwood" Cover

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"The relic of St. Teilo's skull at Llandaff", pg. 4

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Amanda McCavitt
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A Pretty Poetic Devotional, pg. 40

A Pretty Doetic Devotional

By: Amanda McCavitt

Earth Mother upon you where I stand and live
Bounty of many fruits and flowers you give
My body is yours and for that then must I
Give thanks and myself and hospitable eye

Delving into the earth my roots deep they reach
Touching cool and chaotic waters I leach
Branching into the sky draw down ordered warmth
Two powers within me spring energy forth

This land upon which I stand loving is firm
Sea swirl that surrounds and flows deep I affirm
Sky overarching reaching out into space
In knowing all three I contemplate my place

The deep Well and bright Fire and sacred Tree
Flow far and flame high and grow strong within me
Send forth these words swiftly up high and below
Take them to those I would speak with and now know

To Ancestors mine whose form and face I wear
To Spirits of Nature with this world I share
Shining Ones filling my soul with sweet fire
May I live life with in mind your desire

Here Heavens Midrealm and Underworld I see
Above and below and beside here with me

Within these three realms do my songs spirits live
Those whose great gifts I receive and honor give

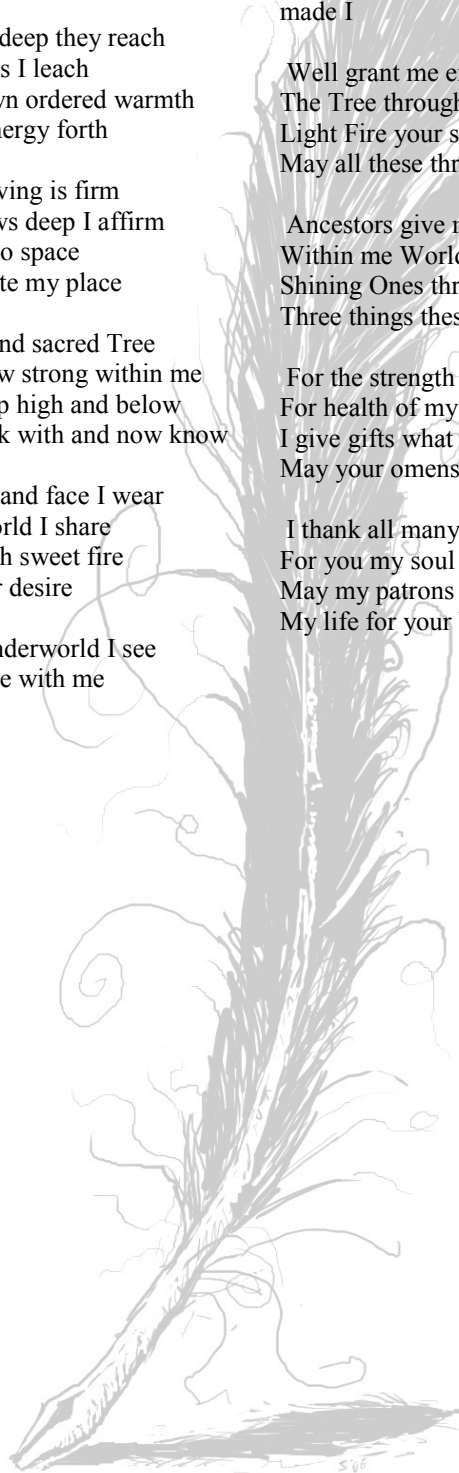
May the depths of the Sea bring Wisdom to me
My Integrity firm as the Land may be
And Piety as found within heavenly Sky
Through all these things three much more whole am made I

Well grant me enough for Hospitable will
The Tree through all things Moderation fulfill
Light Fire your strength lets my Courage grow strong
May all these three things my life carry along

Ancestors give me your long Perseverance
Within me Worlds Spirits Fertility dance
Shining Ones through me your Vision manifest
Three things these allow me to become my best

For the strength of my mind may my will reign long
For health of my body may it remain strong
I give gifts what I can more so of myself
May your omens speak of health wisdom and wealth

I thank all many of you much for your gifts
For you my soul sings and loving spirit lifts
May my patrons hear me as well as the rest
My life for your blessing so all may be blessed!



Submission Guidelines

Oak Leaves welcomes submissions of artwork, articles, poetry, letters to the editor, and anything else that might be of interest to our readers. Submissions, and especially artwork, relating to the turning of the wheel of the year and the celebration of the High Days are particularly encouraged. Submissions from non-members will be accepted, however, if space is constrained, preference will be given to submissions from ADF members. Certain pieces may receive preference, depending on available space.

References and Notations:

Since excellent scholarship is one of ADF's goals, please document sources of ideas and materials that you used for your writings. Detailed endnote references are preferred rather than simply providing a bibliography. Please follow the standards for references in the MLA Handbook or Style Manual. We will not accept submissions with footnotes, as they require considerable editing to convert to endnotes.

Medium of Submission:

Electronic submissions are preferred, sent as email attachments to the Oak Leaves submissions address:

oak-leaves@adf.org

Please send one submission per attachment specifying the format, author's name, your email, and membership status. Be sure the title of the piece and your name are at the top of the page, and you have checked it over for spelling and grammatical errors!

We will also accept electronic submissions on IBM PC-compatible diskettes, sent to:

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

Please do not upload the article directly to the wiki as this has caused some confusion. Written submissions should be sent in one of the following formats: Rich Text Format (RTF), PDF or MS Word. Submitted materials will not be returned to the sender, unless specifically requested.

Art Submission Guidelines:

We now accept photos as well as drawings and computer generated pictures. Some of the color pictures will need to be modified to black and white but we will do that as necessary. We would like to have pictures submitted at 300 dpi, and in a useable format such as .jpg, .png, etc. Please send them to the Art Director at metrophage@gmail.com. We are not currently accepting hard copies of your art.

Deadlines for submissions are:

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



ADF Directory

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*For more information on Groves, Guilds, Special Interest Groups (SIGs), and Kins please see the full listing on our webpage:
<http://www.adf.org/groups/groups-list.html>*



Ár nDraiocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship

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Membership and Subscription Form

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/Postal Code: _____
Country: _____ Phone Number: _____ Birth Date: ____/____/____ (mm/dd/yy)
Email Address: _____ P _ S _ C

The information on this form represents a:

- ☐ New Membership
☐ Renewal 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? _____

I am 18 years of Age or Older: { } Yes { } No (If no, see waiver below.)

ADF Membership Rates:

Regular Membership	_____ years @ \$20/year = \$ _____
Prisoner Membership	_____ years @ \$10/year = \$ _____
Subscription to Oak Leaves - Members	_____ years @ \$20/year = \$ _____
Subscription to Oak Leaves - Non-Members	_____ years @ \$25/year = \$ _____

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

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.

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 Signature

Notary Seal:

Parent/Guardian Printed Name



CedarLight Grove, ADF

Current Witan:

Senior Druid: Deirdre Abbott - deirdre@cedarlightgrove.org

Pursewarden: Caryn MacLuan - caryn@cedarlightgrove.org

Scribe: Crystal Groves - crystal@cedarlightgrove.org

Members Advocate: Jack in the Green - jack@cedarlightgrove.org

Senior Druids Emeritus: Will Pierson and Lady Katherina



CedarLight Grove, ADF is the second oldest Grove in ADF, founded in 1989 by Will Pierson. We established our own physical sanctuary in the fall of 1996, becoming the first Grove in ADF to own its own building. Come see what we've been up to lately!

2006

In September 2006, members of CLG helped organize the first Baltimore Pagan Pride Day.

In the spring of 2006 we offered \$500 to the Officers of Avalon for Katrina relief.

Yule 2006 commemorated our 134th consecutive High Rite of CedarLight Grove, as well as our 10 year anniversary at CedarLight Center.

In 2006 and 2007 members of CedarLight Grove supported the creation of Highland Farms Center of Agroecology as well as participate in "Weed Warriors" to protect Maryland from invasive species.

2007

In March 2007 we held an ADF style full-moon ritual at Four Quarters Farm in Pennsylvania, home of "Stones Rising".

In April 2007 we had a visit from Lakota Elder Garry Rowland of the Wounded Knee Visitor Center In South Dakota. He spoke with our membership on the history of Wounded Knee both during the massacre and the Wounded Knee takeover in the 1970's. During his visit we raised over \$360 to donate to his cause. Our very own Rev. Caryn MacLuan donated money in February 2007 to have the electricity turned back on at the Wounded Knee Visitor Center so that the Lakota could have their annual pow-wow commemorating the Wounded Knee takeover.

In April 2007, our members organized the 2007 Trillium Warrior Games.

In August 2007 we will hold our first annual "Iron Chef Lughnasadh", where cooks will compete to create meals with the same surprise secret ingredient. Details can be reached at: <http://www.cedarlightgrove.org/games>

Regularly

Every Sunday we hold "Rites of Caffiena" which is a morning brunch followed by "Walk with the Old Ones", which is a brief meditational period to reconnect with the divine. We also hold workshops and Lore Meetings on all sorts of subjects.

Every Thursday we hold Lore Meeting with various presentations on ADF Dedicant Program, Warrior's Lodge, Healer's Guild, Naturalists Guild and other craft type projects.

Baltimore, Maryland
www.cedarlightgrove.org

We Dedicate ourselves:

To create & maintain a safe, supportive, & tolerant religious community within which we may practice, study, & discuss earth based spiritual traditions. We are learning to walk with the Old Ones. To guard & serve the earth, its ecosystem and the diversity of spiritual practice present in the pagan community. We strive to walk lightly upon the earth.





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