

PART TEN

ORAL HISTORIES

2003 Introduction

It is my intention to provide the reader with more than one history of Reformed Druidism by presenting the reader with transcripts of oral interviews with prominent Reformed Druids. Their viewpoints should provide more balance and longer term perspectives than my voice or a few scattered documents from them alone could provide to you.

As usual we expect you to understand that their statements reflect their own views, and not that of the Reform as a whole. There are a few dozen other un-transcribed interviews in the archives.

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Figure 1 The Frangquists' interview, Samhain 1993 with Richard & Kit Shelton, Paul Schmidt, Becky Hrobak, Deborah & David Frangquist and Eric Hilleman present.

Drynemetum Press



David Frangquist, '66 Deborah Gavrin Frangquist, '67



October 31, 1993

Eric: This is Eric Hilleman, the Archivist at Carleton College, and I'm conducting an interview today with David Frangquist, class of 1966, and his wife, Deborah Gavrin Frangquist, class of 1967. The Frangquists have both been very involved with the Carleton Druids, and we're expecting that to be the main topic of discussion today, but I think I'd begin by asking you, David, to tell us something about your own personal background, how you got to Carleton College, and then we'll get into the founding of the Druids right after that.

David: I was born in Chicago in 1944 and grew up in the North Shore Suburbs, Lake Forest specifically. As far as coming to Carleton: about the middle of my junior year in high school, we started, as juniors do, thinking about colleges. I think actually Carleton first came to my attention in an article in the *Chicago Tribune* about quality liberal arts colleges in the Midwest. I suffered from childhood asthma, and so one of my concerns was to be as far north as possible to get away from the ragweed areas, so we drew a line through, oh, about Milwaukee and looked at places north of that. Carleton really seemed to be the outstanding school in that area. I did visit other schools that were at that time in the same conference as Carleton; I looked at Ripon and Lawrence and visited Macalester, but Carleton was the place where I just felt most at home. Carleton seemed to have it together better than the other places that I visited, and Carleton was the only place I applied.

Eric: For this tape, actually, I think it would also be relevant if you wanted to say something about your religious background, if any, I don't know what that might be.

David: I was raised in the Presbyterian Church in Lake Forest. I think the main reason that my parents chose that church was that it was the largest, most active church in town, having

been founded originally by the McCormicks, or at least largely supported by McCormick money for a long time. So it was sort of interesting: it was the society church in Lake Forest, and there was a lot going on there, so that's what they chose. I was not real active; I mean I attended Sunday school and all that. I was never active in the high school youth group, although there was one.

In the middle of high school I started becoming interested in other religions, and began buying books about other religions. I had my own copy of the Koran. I acquired through the services of some Mormon missionaries a copy of the Book of Mormon and actually read the whole thing. Perhaps my interest in doing some of the scriptural writing for the Druids came from that period, and wanting perhaps to do a better job than Joseph Smith did! Nevertheless, I became interested in world religions at that time, and was doing a lot of questioning and exploring, as students will do at that age. So I was ready when I came to Carleton just to do more exploring, and the idea of the Druids intrigued me.

I don't believe that I have ever at any point abandoned my sense of being a Christian. The strength with which I have felt that has varied over time, but my interest in other approaches has been one, for me, of personal accretion: that the more that I could learn about other belief systems, the more I felt that that was a benefit and useful. I've always been intrigued by parallels that would exist in different religious traditions. That began in the middle of high school, but I never felt the need to jump from one religion to another. It was largely a matter of curiosity.

Eric: The Reformed Druids of North America began during your freshman year, and I'd like to hear your perspective on the founding and early days of that illustrious organization.

David: Well, at that time of course there was a requirement that we all attend chapel or something like it seven out of ten weekends in the quarter. I didn't particularly question that; I was used to the notion that schools made you do things you didn't want to do, necessarily. And I initially generally did attend chapel, because that was convenient, and it left the rest of Sunday free to do other things. I can't say that I found the chapel services all that meaningful at the time. They were of a general Protestant nature: a little hymn sing, a little reading, a sermon that might or might not mean something.

In the spring of that year, I just overheard that there were some people, some of whom that I knew, some friends of mine, who were starting up this group of Druids, and they were doing it, clearly, to protest the chapel requirement, which we in those days always referred to as "the religious requirement." Nowadays we tend to say "chapel requirement" because it's a little clearer, I think, for people hearing what we're talking about, but it was the "religious requirement" that they were protesting.

I was not involved in the initial founding meeting, which I believe occurred in Goodhue, and involved David Fisher and Howard Cherniack. I think Norman Nelson was present for that also, although I was not there, so I'm not certain. I know that Howard was one of the people who was particularly interested in getting something going here, and I believe that he saw it largely as a political thing. The motivations of others who were involved is murkier; best to ask them, I guess.

I don't know who actually came up with the notion of having Druids be the form, because the discussion, as I

understand it, started out with the idea that we needed to form some new religion on campus. The wording in the Catalog, as I recall, was that you could get credit for attending chapel, or the Sunday evening program, or any regularly organized service of public worship. So they said, "Let's organize something." And the idea was that it should be sufficiently off-the-wall to obviously be a protest to challenge the established order, but to be believable enough that a credible argument could be made that this was, in fact, a valid alternative religious service.

I think the thing they liked about the Druids so much was that so little was known about Druidism. Looking at what few references were available in the Carleton library at the time, we knew that Druids existed; we knew that they had something or other to do with the priesthood of the pre-Roman Celtic peoples in Britain; and not much else was known, partly (probably) because their rituals were secret and nothing was written down. Or at least if anything was written down, it hadn't been found. So we were free, really, to invent as much as we wanted about what Druidism was going to be here at Carleton. But nevertheless it was something that had historical reality; it was not being just totally made up out of whole cloth, we did not have to pretend to have a latter-day revelation from some source that had been started all off fresh. We could at least pretend to have some continuity with an older tradition.

The first meetings were held in April of that year [1963]. I was not present at the first service, which involved setting up David Fisher's record stand on Monument Hill. They put a draping of cloth over it, and that was the altar for the day. I do believe I was present at the second service. I'm no longer sure who invited me to that. I knew David Fisher at the time through work at KARL, where he was an announcer and I was a control operator. For quite a while I was control operator *for* David, and I can't remember now what years I was his control operator for a Saturday night program that he did. I may have already been doing that at that time, and it's quite possible that he invited me. Jan Johnson was another person that I knew from dorm life who was involved in those days with the founding of the Druids, or the early meetings. Either of them might have been the person who got me out there.

There were just, maybe, half a dozen of us at the time, a circle of friends who started the meetings. At that time, we hadn't worked out much in the way of calendar and ritual and so on that we later did. *Now* of course we would say the meetings would normally be held between May 1st and November 1st, during the summer half of the year, but at that time, holding our services in April didn't bother anybody because we hadn't figured out there was anything wrong with April!

David Fisher, as far as we know, made up the ritual. He had an Episcopal background and is currently an Episcopal priest, and there are certain echoes of Episcopalian Prayer Book language that show up in his design of the service. He pretended, perhaps that's a pejorative word, he *represented* that he had been ordained as a Druid somewhere in Missouri by someone else, and so therefore there was continuity with the past, and he could come in here and be Arch-Druid and carry the tradition into Carleton. But he was always vague about this prior experience and who this was and where it occurred, and I have to say that I don't really know anything about it, other than the fact that he said that it occurred.

All of the rest of our Druid tradition, then, springs from David Fisher as the first Arch-Druid here at Carleton. We can trace lines of ordination from one person to another, and

it all goes back to him. If it goes back prior to him, well, you'll have to ask David Fisher about that. He was the source of our early liturgy, and where he got it from, who knows?

We did decide after a couple of meetings that the little metal record stand was not really a very adequate altar. The idea was that we would build something a little more substantial. It seemed like Monument Hill was the right place to do it: there were all of these inscriptions on the monument about first services of various sorts that had occurred on that site, and so, therefore, this seemed like a good place in Northfield to start another religious tradition. So we found a bunch of rocks. At that time in a little grove of trees near Monument Hill there were quite a few rock piled up because, I believe, Williams had been torn down only a couple of years before, and some of the rubble from that had simply been dumped in this little spot in the trees. So it wasn't hard to go and find rocks and cart them over to Monument Hill and pile them up, which is basically what we did to create our altar.

It didn't last very long! In fairly short order, people we identified as the Anti-Druids came, we believe that these were mostly jocks from Goodhue, who probably had a keg amongst them prior to this escapade, they came and ripped all the rocks apart and threw them about Monument Hill. All of this is written up in the Early Chronicles. I have to say that when I wrote the Early Chronicles, I really was describing in there true events. Now the language is in some cases deliberately vague, or deliberately flowery, but the events behind it all really did occur. So the language in there about the building of the altar, and the Anti-Druids coming and tearing it down, and all this, that all happened. We made several attempts at building the altar, and after a while we kind of gave up that spring, because, well, it was getting to be a bit of a chore!

At the same time we were also carrying the protest to official levels. This was the thing that Howard was the most interested in. We filled out the little slips, I believe they were little green slips that we had to fill out for chapel. You'd put on there the date and the institution that you attended, and turn it in. In the case of the men, we would turn it in to our proctors, and women turned them in to...

Deborah: We turned them in to the Dean of Women's Office. My recollection is that they were yellow, which may have been women's slips, I don't know.

David: OK. Maybe I'm confusing the convo slips with the chapel slips. Anyway, we filled out little slips saying that we had attended these Druid services, and we expected to have credit.

Deborah: We may have given them to our housemothers; they got to the Dean of Women's Office, anyway.

David: Again, after this passage of time I don't remember exactly when all these things happened, but I believe we did do it that first spring. It met with varying responses, in that the men's slips were rejected as being not legitimate or not qualifying for credit, [while] only a couple of slips were turned in by women, but they did, in fact, get credit. We had great fun speculating over why the women got credit. In the case of the men, the slips were reviewed by someone in the Dean of Men's Office (the Dean was then Casey Jarchow), and they spotted these things and said they were not legitimate.

So a delegation was led by Howard Cherniack to the Dean's office to protest this action, and to raise the question: why would the Druids not be acceptable? They went armed with Yellow Pages from the Twin Cities and lists of various

strange and wonderful groups that met there. I remember there was something about the Seventh Hour Trumpeters, and several other groups that sounded very strange. Nevertheless, these were established churches, they were in the phone book. So Howard said to the Dean: well, suppose that one of us wanted to attend one of those churches and put that on the chapel slip; would *that* be acceptable? And he said no. So Howard said, well, then, what gives you the right to decide what is a religion and what isn't? These others are established churches, and you're saying they're not legitimate. What gives you that right? To which Casey's response basically was: the fact that I'm the Dean of Men. I get to decide. There was no pretense here to any intellectual defense of this position; it was purely arbitrary.

Being the good, obedient children of the fifties that we were, when our slips were rejected, we simply went off to chapel, or whatever we needed to do to get enough points. We did not push the thing to the wall. We were not going to jeopardize our Carleton education for this thing, but we did try to make a lot of noise about it.

One of the difficulties that we had was people tended not to believe that we existed. We thought that we had this wonderful protest vehicle, and yet when we tried to get students excited about the fact that we were being denied credit, and that this was not legitimate, it was very hard to get other people on campus interested in that. They simply believed that we didn't exist. Occasionally we would get people to come out to the Hill and meet with us on Saturday afternoons, but many people that we tried to invite simply believed that we were pulling their legs, and that if they went out there, they would be the fools for showing up for something that didn't in fact happen. So we never were able to drum up a ground-swell of opinion. We couldn't get the *Carletonian* to write editorials on our behalf, or any of that sort of thing, which we found very interesting, given the climate of protest that was beginning to develop in a number of areas having to do with things like women's hours and the like.

So that was kind of where we were at the end of that first spring. The following fall we made an attempt to get a little more organized. By that time I was writing things that later became *The Druid Chronicles*, trying to put together some "scripture" and add a little more legitimacy to what we were doing. We also printed some pamphlets, and we got ourselves a table at the day where various campus organizations could put out literature and get people to sign up. We got ourselves a table and passed out pamphlets and tried to get people to sign up. Not too many did. And again, we kept getting this response: oh, well, this is all just a put-on; there aren't really any Druids; you're just pretending. But a few people would believe that we really were there, and [would] come out and meet with us.

At some point we decided that when we had thirty people, that was a magic number of some sort, and we declared that that was a *multitude*. So whenever we had thirty, we could say, "Oh, we had a *multitude* present for our meeting" and that did happen a couple of times.

I believe we had a multitude present for Halloween that year, the Samhain service. That was really quite an elaborate affair, with a number of people in robes. We had torches, and we had a grand procession through the Arb from Monument Hill to a nice fire area in the Upper Arb somewhere near the southern-most bridge and up the hill a little bit. I probably could find it again if I went out and tromped around out there. We had this long procession along the various trails through

the Upper Arb to get there, shocking a number of people along the way. I don't know whether they were more shocked by our regalia or just by the fact that we were carrying all of these flaming brands through there.

Again, the events that are recounted in, by this time the *Latter Chronicles*, that evening really did happen. We had sort of a fortune-telling period, which started with a process of melting bits of lead in a ladle in the fire, and pouring them into water, and then people would look at whatever shapes were formed in the water, and attempt to interpret them, much as you would tea leaves. I had read somewhere that this was a fortune-telling technique, so we did that. And as people got into the swing of it, there were some things that sounded a little bit like prophecy, and like some people were in fact having some kind of profound experience, one of which we later interpreted to be a foreshadowing of Kennedy's assassination. There were enough echoes in that prophecy, and it is described in the *Chronicles*, that it really later sounded like, gee, that fits. Which was a little scary, there were some people who weren't at all sure that they liked this. It was beginning to sound awfully real.

And there were, in fact, I think, a number of us who were beginning to value the experience we were having. Is it a real religion? Well, that's always one of the questions. Were we just playing games, or were we really doing something here that has validity in the spiritual realm? I think that's a question that each of us has to answer for ourselves. It was certainly becoming something that was increasingly important to us in ways outside of the initial protest idea.

After November 1st, we decided it was convenient, by that time Fisher had worked out the notion that there were these two halves of the year, and that there was going to be a period of the Waters of Life in the summer, and a period of the Waters of Sleep in the winter, and so we would not meet between November 1st and May 1st. This was the period of the Waters of Sleep. And besides, it was not very congenial to be meeting outdoors in the bosom of the Earth Mother during that part of the year.

Deborah: Well, not only the Waters of Sleep, but the suggestion that the Earth Mother herself was asleep during that season, which did make a great deal of sense here in Minnesota.

David: Right. So there wasn't much activity during winter, other than I kept on writing on *The Druid Chronicles*. I do remember having a discussion with David Fisher about that time (I think it was more toward the spring) in which he was beginning to feel that maybe this thing was going too far, that maybe we should just stop it, that it was in danger of becoming a "real religion." I remember him saying very specifically to me, "Well, I don't want to become another Joseph Smith." And, basically, I told him that it was too late, that this was going to happen anyway, and that I had no problem at all with being Brigham Young! But I think in many ways he was hooked anyway. He was definitely enjoying playing the Arch-Druid.

Deborah: He always had a flair for the dramatic.

David: Yes.

Eric: At what point did the structure of Arch-Druids and Preceptors and all the various offices get established? Was that something that happened very, very early?

David: That happened very early. I would have to go back and look at the dates that occur on the copies of the constitution that we have. One of the aspects of the political gambit here was to become a recognized, legitimate campus organization. We

felt this would help our argument that we should get credit for this. To do that, there were prescribed formalities. You had to adopt a constitution. You had to submit the constitution to CSA and have them recognize you as a campus organization. You had to have a faculty adviser. There were a number of things to be checked off.

So it was necessary to write a constitution. I believe that Howard Cherniack wrote the constitution, and in the course of that developed the terminology: the Arch-Druid, the Preceptor, the Server as the offices. I don't remember any specific conversations with them about where those things came from. The Arch-Druid was obvious. It's a term that you see in the literature about Druids. We believe that there was somebody that at least *we* call the Arch-Druid, who was a leader of Druids in Britain.

The other terms, I don't know where they came from. It appears that Howard may have designed the rôle of Preceptor for himself. The description in the constitution says that the Preceptor is charged with responsibility for secular matters, which involved things like writing the constitution, getting it submitted to CSA, leading the delegation the Dean's Office, and so on. But I, at least, had no direct involvement in the development of the constitution, but that was all done the first spring in '63, I believe. So we were going through those mechanics of trying to get recognition the following school year.

Eric: Do you know anything about how a faculty advisor was obtained?

David: Well, Jon Messenger was on campus the year '63-'64. I think he was only here a year, as a visiting professor. But his area of specialty was Celtic studies.

Deborah: It was fairly obvious, and he was willing to do it.

David: So I believe Howard approached him, and he said, oh yeah, sure. He was quite willing to do that. He was not actively involved, in that he did not come out to our meetings and so on. We chatted with him a few times, and he shared some lore with us. [He played] largely a figurehead rôle. He understood that he needed to be there as an advisor, and that that was mainly what we required of him. Later, after he left, we approached Bardwell Smith, whom we believed to be sympathetic to our point of view, as indeed he was, and he was quite happy to be our official advisor. But again, Bardwell never really took an active rôle in working with the Druids. He was simply willing to lend his name to the project, and chat with us one on one if we wanted to.

Deborah: There may be a small gap, historically, there, because Bardwell was on sabbatical '64'65, and if our recollection is correct, that Jon Messenger left at the end of '63'64 school year, I'm not sure who we had as faculty advisor '64-'65. But if we remained a club in good standing, we found someone.

David: Well, I don't believe there was an advisor that year, and I don't believe we were a club in good standing, either!

Deborah: That's possible.

David: During the '63-'64 year we did make all the proper applications and so on, and my recollection is that CSA had no problem with our being a campus organization. Anybody who wanted to be an organization could, as long as you got the appropriate things checked off. I do have correspondence from Jon Kaufman, who was one of the CSA people responsible for putting together a booklet about campus activities, and we had submitted a piece about the Druids for that booklet. The correspondence that I have is essentially an apology for the fact that that piece had been deleted just prior

to the final printing at the end of the '63-'64 year. Without any prior warning or discussion or anything, it had simply been summarily deleted by whoever finally put the thing together. So there was certainly an atmosphere of persecution there. There were people who really didn't want us to be legitimate, for whatever reason.

The thing that changed, of course, was that in the summer of '64 the chapel requirement was abolished. Suddenly the rules of the game were all different, and the importance of our being an official campus organization greatly diminished. We were never interested in getting any money out of CSA, or anything like that, so what point was there, really, in being an official organization, other than perhaps getting your name in a booklet, which they obviously weren't going to allow? So I think we paid less attention after '64 to the details of whether we really were a club in good standing. I don't remember spending any time on it when I was Arch-Druid, walking paperwork through CSA or anything like that. I think we just decided that that didn't matter so much any more.

Deborah: '64-'65 was certainly a year of some soul searching, the question being whether we had any reason to exist any longer. That was an important topic of discussion during that time, more important, as David says, than our official status.

David: To back up a little bit: during the '63-'64 school year we were still attempting to get organized. I guess I had a little more interest in that sort of thing than the other people. I was busy writing the *Chronicles* and finding what I could in the library about Druidism. One of the things that happened: in the course of events David Fisher had made some references to the Ten Orders of Druidism. He said he was a Third Order Priest, and he was busily admitting other people to the First and Second Orders. Well, what about Fourth through Tenth? What were they? He was not very specific about that, and I suggested that perhaps we should associate each one of them with some god or goddess from Celtic mythology. That was all right with David Fisher, so I went off to the library, and combed through the books, and managed to come up with some names, and invented the so-called higher orders.

Then the problem was: how were we going to get them populated, since this whole thing was sort of a boot-strap effort. I was having great fun inventing structures and procedures, and so invented this mechanism whereby each order would elect the Patriarch of the next order. There was no consideration of Matriarchs at this point; everything was still very patriarchal, and I'm sure Deborah will have things to say about that when it's her turn. It just didn't occur to us that that was an issue yet. "Us," I say, the men. It did not occur to the men that that was an issue. So we were going to have a Patriarch of each of these higher orders, and the Patriarch would be able to consecrate anyone that he chose as a member of the order, and when the order felt like getting around to it, it could elect the next Patriarch.

So we had a structure that would allow us to climb up the ladder and get somebody into each of these higher orders over a period of time. Norman Nelson was very sympathetic to that. Norman particularly liked to collect titles, so he wanted to be member of a bunch of different orders. My recollection is that David Fisher was a little lukewarm about the whole "higher orders" thing. Perhaps, because it would dilute his primacy as Arch-Druid? I don't know. I should not attribute motives to him. But Norman definitely was interested, so we put that all together.

Meanwhile, my own ordination as a Third Order Druid occurred in April of '64. I think this was a watershed for

David Fisher, certainly. When I told him that I wanted to be ordained as a Third Order, become a priest, he was really very reluctant at first, perhaps because that meant that it really was going to move beyond his control. He would no longer be completely in charge. It would have more of a life of its own than he had initially anticipated, perhaps. But he did go along with it.

We had an extenuating circumstance, in that we had made one more attempt to build an altar on Monument Hill. This time we had put the thing together with mortar, and we needed to give the mortar a chance to dry before somebody would come and take it apart. David did the talking about, well, to become a Third Order, you had to do this all-night vigil. I don't know where he came up with the notion. Of course, vigils have occurred in various traditions. There are vigils in the course of becoming a knight, for example. At any rate, that was the test that he prescribed: that you'd have to do an all-night vigil on the bosom of the Earth Mother. This worked out very nicely with the fact that we needed somebody to guard this new altar.

So that's what I did: I sat up next to it with my little fire all night, and made sure that nobody came and disturbed it. David came up in the morning, and we had the ordination of the first Third Order Druid after David. Shortly thereafter, Norman Nelson wanted also to be ordained as a Third Order, and David and I together performed that ceremony. David actually performed the ceremony, but I was present for it.

We began some traditions at that time, too. In the course of the vigil, existing Third Order priests on campus should please come out and spend some time with the person; make it a little easier to get through the night: some conversation, a little story-telling, some reading, whatever, provide company. Also, all the Third Orders around should if possible attend the ordination service, but at the very least, have breakfast together afterwards. After that ordination of Norman Nelson, we all got together in Goodhue for breakfast, and had what counts, I believe, as the first meeting of the Council of Dalon ap Landu, at which we began the process, that I was outlining in the *Chronicles*, of how we would populate the higher orders. I believe it was at that breakfast meeting that we elected David Fisher as Patriarch of the Fourth Order.

At about the same time, David Fisher resigned the office of Arch-Druid and turned it over to Norman Nelson, who as I say, was interested in collecting whatever titles he could collect. He wanted to be Arch-Druid for at least a couple of months before he left Carleton. (He was a senior that year.) So he finished out the year as Arch-Druid. Then since he was gone from campus, that meant that the following fall we had to have some sort of passing on of the torch to somebody else. It was at that time that I was elected Arch-Druid. David was not particularly interested in taking that on again. As a senior he had plenty of things to do, and was quite willing for me to do it.

In the spring of '64, then, on one day we populated as many of the higher orders as we could at that time. It was sort of an assembly-line process in which David Fisher first admitted Norman and me to the Fourth Order. We had our ceremony doing that, this was all on the Hill of the Three Oaks, and we all sat down and had our meeting of the Council of the Fourth Order and elected Norman as the Patriarch of the Fifth Order. Then we all stood up and did the ceremony that Norman had written. He admitted David and me to the Fifth Order, and then we sat down and had our meeting of the Fifth Order to elect me as Patriarch of the

Sixth Order. The rationale there simply was that I was going to be at Carleton longer than either of them, so by having me as the Sixth Order, I would have an opportunity to admit some other people to the Sixth Order, perhaps, and elect someone in a later class to be Patriarch of the Seventh Order and so keep it going. At least that was the plan.

I don't believe that there was any sense that we wanted [any] higher order to be higher than another. This was certainly one of David Fisher's concerns; he didn't want that to be true, and I didn't see any reason for it to be true. The only reason we were doing this was because at one point he had said there were ten orders, and so we were trying to make that happen. And it was fun, and a lot of what we did was done for fun. There's no question about that.

We were really quite clear that the most important order, in the sense of the continuing Druid activity, was going to be the Third Order: that Arch-Druids would be drawn from the Third Order, anyone who wanted to be admitted to the higher orders would first be Third Order, and so on. The rest of it was just icing on the cake. At least, that was certainly part of the argument that I made to get myself elected to the Sixth Order!

Eric: As an historical footnote, when you mentioned Bardwell Smith, it reminded me that I had mentioned to Charlotte Smith that I was going to be talking to you, and she said, "Be sure to have them note, for the record, that [our] son was the first pupil in the Druid Sunday School."

David: Yes!

Eric: OK, good: it's on the record now, Charlotte.

David: Yes, I do remember Brooks coming to at least one service. He babbled on quite happily while we did whatever it was we were doing.

Eric: This probably is a natural time to bring Deborah into the conversation, since we are now chronologically up to the year that you arrived. Why don't you start the same way that David did; tell me something about your own background, religious as well as otherwise, and how you came to Carleton, and how you encountered the Druids.

Deborah: Actually, I was fascinated by the fact that David chose to tell us when he was born, because that wouldn't have occurred to me, but I will do that. I was born in Brooklyn in 1947. I spent some time as a very young child in New York City, and then in Long Island, but did most of my growing up in Tarrytown, New York, which is probably best known as the site in which the Legend of Sleepy Hollow took place. Washington Irving lived in the town *that way*; the Legend of Sleepy Hollow took place in the town the other way, and my elementary school was on the site Katrina Van Tassel's home, and in fact my high school was Sleepy Hollow. And our team was the Horsemen.

I say this because I think it may actually have some relation to my willingness to explore non-mainstream traditions, that there was even in this rather respectable New York suburb a slight odor of feyness to what we did as we grew up in the schools. I come from a non-believing Jewish background. It was explicitly non-believing. That is, my father had grown up in an Orthodox Jewish home, my mother in a non-believing home. Their religion was Freudianism. They were both trained social workers, and they didn't have any use for any of that stuff. It was a psychological crutch; virtually any religion [was].

By the time I arrived at Carleton, I had done some significant religious searching of my own, starting when I

was about eleven. Starting with the local Jewish Temple, which at the time, I think, was very much in the mainstream of Reformed Judaism, which meant it was extremely rational, and there was no hint of the supernatural, or the transcendent, or much of anything except Jewish history and how to do the rituals. I went to a Quaker camp in Vermont for a couple of years, as a result of which I attended Quaker meetings for some years, which was probably the first hint of any kind of spiritual life that I got tuned into.

Then I began, I guess about the end of my junior year in high school, a rather odd process of attending the local Episcopal church, and also the local Roman Catholic church, because there were a group of us who attended the Episcopal church, but some of those people were Roman Catholic. So after the Episcopal service was over, we had to run down the street and go to Mass so that they could go to Mass. Since most of us who weren't Roman Catholic were studying Latin, and it was still the Latin Mass, this was sort of fun. So I can't claim any major spiritual quest, but I was sure mucking around with a variety of religious traditions and, like David, had begun a process of reading spiritual books, or scripture or whatever, from a variety of traditions by that time.

I came to Carleton as a 16-year-old. My parents had had me skip one grade in elementary school because they felt I wasn't stimulated enough, and then in what should have been my junior year in high school, I decided I didn't want to do any more high school. There were a number of possible pretexts for that, including the threatened election of a couple of John Birchers to the local board who were proposing to eliminate all Advanced Placement courses, which would have made my senior year a *real* desert.

I had already, being an extremely diligent child, early in my sophomore year gone to the guidance counselors, and said, "I want to go to a small liberal arts college somewhere." They had given me a list of, I don't know, seventy schools nation-wide, or something like that. In those days, one could write away to colleges and get entire bulletins, the entire course catalog and everything; there were no view-books that I remember. I had these things stacked all around my room for much of a year, as I sort of whittled things down. So when I decided I wanted to go to Carleton College, I had some idea of places I wanted to check out, even though this was really a year early, and applied to three colleges. The deal my parents made, since this was only my junior year, was that if I could get into a college of the quality they were sure I could get into after four years, I could go. The Admissions Office was doing interviews in downtown New York in a hotel, so that was where I was interviewed. I had taken the SATs by then, but late; so we didn't have any scores or anything like that.

I visited the other two colleges I was interested in, Brandeis and Radcliffe, because they were closer. I had never been to Carleton before I arrived here, but basically made the choice partly on the basis of that interview, because I liked the way the interviewer approached me. It was far less patronizing than the Radcliffe interviewer. That was part of it the sense of being treated as somebody who sort of belonged in a college. Also, [I was] very attracted by the Social Co-op, and by the total lack of sororities and fraternities here. I have sometimes found myself wondering how different my life would have been if I'd gone to Brandeis, because I probably would have ended up as a good Jew if I had done that.

Anyway, I ended up here in the fall of '63. I may actually have been at that first Samhain service. I cannot remember the chronology exactly, but I remember the kind of

procession with torches, and I don't remember whether we did that the same way the following year. I also believe I remember Druids coming through the library in procession, calling people to join in that service, robed Druids.

Eric: Not with the torches, I hope!

Deborah: Not with the torches in the library, no. But with robes.

David: I do remember doing that. I'm not sure which year that was.

Deborah: And I certainly remember the fortune telling with the melted lead, and do not remember how many times we did that. I think I was present at more than one. But what I was actually doing that freshman year, in terms of any kind of religious life, was seriously looking into the Episcopal church: attending Canterbury Club Sunday Mornings, sort of checking out whether I was interested in this stuff. I did not become significantly involved in Druid life or services, except maybe for the great festivals, until the following fall of '64.

But I knew Druids, because I got involved in KARL very early in my freshman year. I ran into the radio station at one of those, whatever they called them then, where there were tables to sign people up. But there was also a radio station open house that I was invited to on that occasion. This was in the days when freshmen wore beanies for about six weeks. One day, very early in my tenure at the radio station, when I was typing something at the typewriter, the then station manager came up and removed the beanie from my head, and announced that I didn't have to wear it *there*. This sealed my commitment to the radio station, and therefore created a commitment to a place where there were a number of Druids, including David and Dave Fisher, who were present. So I certainly knew *about* Druid activities my first year here, even though, as I say, my recollection is of not being involved, except maybe for the major festivals (since I like bonfires) that first year.

My second year, the '64/'65 year, I began attending Druid services regularly. I'm not sure of the chronology in terms of my doing that and our becoming a couple. That whole fall there was a certain amount of figuring out how we felt about each other, but that didn't get clarified until Thanksgiving, so that was certainly after Samhain. The kind of advice women were given in those days involved appearing, at least, to be interested in the things that interested a man you were interested in. So my motives may not have been at all pure, becoming involved in Druid activities. By Beltane we were a couple. We did stuff on February 1st; we did something with the Waters of Sleep that year; I think it was indoors.

David: Yes, it was in 2nd Willis.

Deborah: And I remember that. One of the things that was going on during that period, in terms of women's status within the Druids, well, there were several things going on. I remember an under-current of slight titillation about possible sexual overtones to a few of the things which I now remember with a kind of horror. One of them was that, although, as David said, we didn't talk about Matriarchs much, the fact is the names you'd come up with for the ten orders, the Tenth was Fertility, and I think was in fact a goddess. So there was some discussion of the idea that that ought to have a Matriarch rather than a Patriarch.

It was also difficult, if not impossible, for us to think about a woman vigiling at that point, because we had curfews. Again, this surprises me a little. We didn't have bed checks, so if you didn't sign yourself out, they wouldn't know that you were still out. But we were very good, even when we

objected. You would have had to do a little bit of stuff to not sign yourself out, because if you left the dorm after 7:00, you were supposed to sign yourself out. But with a little bit of advanced planning, with a place like the radio station to leave one's gear during the day, for a vigil, it would have been entirely possible just not to go back to one's dorm after some mid-afternoon hour, so that one didn't have to sign oneself out, so that they — the authorities — would never know that one was still out. It would have been necessary to wait past 6:00 [a.m.], when they re-opened the doors, probably until about a quarter of eight, to get back in again without being seen, but this could have been done. We just didn't think about it. We weren't supposed to stay out all night.

So there was this apparently unstoppable obstacle, that you couldn't do a vigil if you were a woman so you couldn't become a Third Order Druid. But there was the beginning of a sense that that was perhaps not equitable, so I think it was Fisher came up with the idea that a woman could a priestess *unto* an order, of one of the higher orders, but not *of* any of the orders, and could not be a Third Order Druid. There was someone, I cannot remember who she was, but I was present when she was made a priestess *unto* the Fourth Order.

David: It was Danny [Hotz].

Deborah: Danny, right. It was a fun ceremony, again with these little odd under-currents of there maybe being something sexual about this, but nobody quite knew what. And that was sort of where it rested, and I think she was the only priestess "unto" one of the orders that I recall.

David: As far as I know, yeah.

Deborah: As far as recall, that was it.

David: I think I actually came up with the term "unto," but it was in response, as I recall, to David Fisher's wanting to be able specifically to appoint Danny as a priestess, and to get around the fact that she would presumably would not be able to vigil.

Deborah: Right. When you look back at it, we're basically talking about the 24 months following the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, which none of us had heard of. This is proto-feminism, if it's anything like that. We were treated pretty much as equals in the classroom, but none of us had much expectation of social equality, notions of mutuality of relationships. It came very fast thereafter, but it wasn't there then.

So my participation with the Druids my sophomore year became more frequent. I was a regular attendee at services. I became a Second Order Druid very quickly, but then there was this wall about becoming a Third Order Druid. Meanwhile, our relationship got closer during the summer of '65, when we were both on the first of the revived Carleton in Japan programs, conducting a courtship in various places in Japan, including many Buddhist and Shinto temples. And there certainly was, I think, some sense of an enhanced importance to the nature-worship aspect of Druidism as I learned more about Shinto. I was studying one of the Shinto fertility goddesses, who's now pretty much a goddess of wealth, rice having gotten transformed into yen over the generations. It's possible that in my own mind some of this titillation was settling down a bit as I began to deal with this in an ancient culture that was relatively better documented than the Druids.

That year, '65 '66, I was both taking formal instruction to prepare for baptism in the Episcopal church (with Bardwell Smith) and trying to figure out some way that I could become a Third Order Druid. In that year there was a loophole created

in the system. Upper class women, I think it was *only* upper class women, could get letters from our parents which were filed with the Dean of Women, saying that we could sign ourselves out for some specified number of overnights a term. These were explicitly supposed to be *not* in Northfield. They were intended to allow us to stay overnight with friends in the Cities if we went to a late play or concert. But it meant that there was a mechanism to sign yourself out. As I was saying before, there was this problem of getting out of the dorm before the hour at which you had to sign yourself out. [This] made it simpler to think about that, and I decided that this was the chance I was waiting for to become a Third Order Druid. We discussed how this should be done, and I decided that I was not comfortable with lying about where I going. I could have in fact claimed that I was going to visit friends in the cities; there were friends who would have insisted that I was there, should I need such backup. But I simply signed myself out to the Hill of Three Oaks.

To backtrack slightly, one possible explanation for why the women who submitted Chapel slips back in the first year got them accepted and the men did not was that because the women were locked into their dorms, there was a system whereby there was someone who stayed up all night just inside Gridley, which connected to all the other dorms, to admit legitimate late arrivals — that is, the other dorms were locked at 11:15, but seniors could have a certain number of times out 'til midnight, and then later to 1:15 or 1:30 — but also to admit miscreants who arrived in the middle of the night after falling asleep after who-knew-what sinful activities in the Arb. These were older women from downtown who were employees of the Dean of Women's office but not regular college employees. And one of their night-time tasks involved checking off Chapel slips. So they just checked off names, and were simply not part of the administration in the way that the Dean of Men's staff were.

It's my belief that some similar oversight was why nobody wondered where the heck the Hill of the Three Oaks was, why I hadn't given a phone number or anything like that. That was how I managed, I think only a year after Danny sort of gave up on the idea of being a Third Order Druid, to become a Third Order Druid.

The experience of vigiling *is* an important experience, and it may have been enhanced for me by the sense of there being something a little daring in doing this, and then of being visited by men during the night, because of course the only other Third Order Druids there were to visit me were male. In a sense, though, we were all taking this very seriously, which was very important to me. So I am both a Third Order and a Sixth Order Druid, since David was still around and could do the Sixth Order [ordination]. Within a couple of years the curfews were gone and it wasn't an issue at all, but it was an important change that suddenly we had to start thinking about the idea that Third Order Druids were women as well as men. I don't think we were equipped to think about it very well, because as I say we weren't thinking very much about changing the nature of female rôles in society.

Eric: Let's talk a little bit about "taking this all very seriously" in connection with the fact that in the summer of 1964 the Religious Requirement is gone; the initial reason for founding the Druids has been removed, but the Druids didn't stop. Say something about why that was.

David: I for one at least had become fond of the Druids. I had put a lot of work into writing the *Chronicles*, and coming up with solutions to various organizational problems. We had had

formal meetings of the Council the previous spring to adopt some of the early resolutions that would clarify things after Norman went on to other pursuits, and so on. It would certainly hard to drop it, but I don't believe it was the force of my personality that kept it going, or anything like that.

What had happened in the course of the previous year was that a number of people had found that they were getting something out of it. At least one person, Dick Smiley, considered Druidism to be his *only* religion. He didn't believe in anything else, and yet there was something very compelling about Druidism for him. A lot of fun, of course, he enjoyed playing the game as much as anyone else, but there was something more to it than that. We had made quite an effort, I know David Fisher did and I did also, to find readings that would be meaningful to people. We adopted a tradition, that I don't think was ever formalized in the written liturgy, of there being three meditations as part of each service: there was the Written Meditation, the Spoken Meditation, and the Silent Meditation, in that order. We would read something, and then whoever was presiding (usually the Arch-Druid) would make some observations about what was read, and then there was a period in which we would all sit quietly together, much in the style of a Quaker meeting, although nowhere near as long as you would do in a Quaker meeting, and simply think about what had been said, if that's what you wanted to think about, or think about the noise that the wind was making in the trees, or think about whatever you wanted to think about. A period of being together as a group, and *quiet* together, and doing whatever happened during that period.

People liked that. They enjoyed it. They found it refreshing. They were getting something out of it that they valued. I certainly saw, when I became Arch-Druid, a goal of introducing people to the riches of other religious traditions, which, as I said earlier, I had started exploring in high school myself. [I] had found a number of passages in Buddhist literature, in Taoist literature, in Zen. I was getting very enthusiastic about Zen at that point, and did quite a bit of reading in Buddhism in preparation for the summer in Japan. I wanted to share those things, and I think David Fisher had much the same sense, that he wanted to share things that he had discovered. He was more into Hindu literature than I was. There were treasures that seemed to relate to our Druid tradition of focusing on Nature as an area to concentrate our worship, but that are found in various traditions. We combed the Psalms looking for the nature psalms, so occasionally there would be something from Jewish or Christian tradition that would be the reading for the day. The idea was to spread it around as much as possible.

I think we sensed, even after the Chapel requirement was dropped, that there was work to be done, that the experience of most students at Carleton was very narrow in terms of what was out there to be learned about people's spiritual experiences. We saw a task to be performed there in terms of broadening that experience, and people responded to that. At least there were enough people who kept coming and listening to what we were doing to keep it going.

Deborah: It's hard now to know what my concepts were at the time, but several things I think are relevant. First of all, one of the arguments made against the Chapel requirement was that it had become an interference with, rather than a furtherance of, spiritual and moral growth for people. It was producing a reaction against religious tradition, which was contrary to its intention. I think there was some feeling that Druidism could be sort of the proof of this claim, that if we were able to

follow our, what I would now call our spiritual paths but I don't think was talked of that way then, that there would be some things for us to discover. I still find the opening prayer of the Liturgy — which at one point I believe I was told Fisher had found in Hindu scripture — the one that says

(In the original) O Lord (and I would now say O God),

forgive these three sins, which are due to our human limitations:

Thou art everywhere, but we worship Thee here;

Thou art without form, but we worship Thee in these forms;

Thou hast no need of prayers and sacrifices,

but we offer unto thee these, our prayers and sacrifices.

I still find that one of the most profound spiritual statements I have ever heard. It informs my understanding of what I as a believing Christian am doing in Christian liturgy, including the Eucharist. Every time I ended out on the Hill somewhere saying that prayer, I was moved anew by it, and I don't think I was alone in that.

The meditations that David was describing, in fact, for me significantly echoed my experience of modified and short Quaker meetings at my Quaker camp. On Sundays we had a full hour of meeting, but every day we had brief chapel services that were Quaker meeting style. But because we were a children's camp, both on the weekdays and on Sundays our counselors read things to us, very much the kind of thing that we also did in Druid services. Perhaps a little more of the Prophet at camp than in the Druid services, but also readings from Buddhism, readings from Hinduism, readings from the mystics of the Western traditions.

There was what I would now call a kind of spiritual freedom in the opportunity to, either on one's own or in formal classes in Eastern religions, find moving passages or thought-provoking passages, and bring them as written meditations to the Druid services. When I look back at what was available in other religious life, this was just *before* things began to explode with experimentation in some branches of Christianity, this was some of the best stuff around, I think for most of us.

David: Another dimension of it that I felt: one of things that was very important at Carleton, and I believe it's important now, is the sense that there is something very real about being intellectually honest. That's a very important value at Carleton. Having said as part of the protest against the Chapel requirement that we should be treated as a legitimate religion, that we were just as legitimate as anybody else, it was necessary to follow through on that. If we had just disappeared when the requirement disappeared, it would have in some way validated the position of the Dean of Men that this wasn't real, that it was purely political, that there was nothing to it. And we were going to do that! We were going to somehow prove that there really was something to this after all, that our claim had been legitimate.

I don't think *that*, in and of itself, would have been sufficient to carry it more than a few months, but I think that was at least part of my initial feeling in that next fall after the requirement was gone. Part of what gave me the energy to keep it going was to demonstrate in some real way that there really *was* something there, that the claims we were making were valid. Over time, things change. New dimensions get

added. It begins to take on other aspects of its own life. But in that first year I think that was part of what was going on.

Deborah: That desire gave us enough space to begin to discover that we wanted to continue meeting on the Hill of the Three Oaks on Saturdays during half of the year, that there was value in our lives [there].

David: Also, I was talking before about how a great many students refused to believe that we existed. Even at my own 25th Reunion I had conversations with people, talking about having been one of the founding Druids and having people say, "Oh, but they didn't really exist, did they?" By now we are officially mentioned in the 125-year history of the College, and yet there are still people saying, "Oh, but they weren't really there." And there was this stubborn insistence that yes we did exist, yes we really did happen, and we were not going to be wished away by people. That sense of being outcasts in some sense, of being an identifiable minority struggling against the rest of the world, gave us cohesion as a group and fueled that desire to prove to people that we could stick it out.

Deborah: There was something else as well, which you touched on when you talked about the fortune telling and the sense that maybe we were onto something more powerful than we thought, which was the weather magic. Which we continued. Before football games, which was essentially what our meeting time was on [Saturday], there was a spring when the skies were very gray and dark, and we processed to Mai Fête Island, and the skies cleared as we did it. There was a sense that we might be performing a public service!

David: There was also one occasion, I remember, where Mark Steinberg and I (Mark was the station manager of KARL and I was the news director at that time) had an invitation from United Press International to come up to the Twin Cities and attend a Twins game. There was going to be a reception beforehand at which we got to meet Eugene McCarthy, and this was a big deal. This was in the old outdoor stadium, and it was raining cats and dogs all morning. It was dreadful. But we had left a request with the Druids that they do the proper incantations and make the weather nice.

Deborah: I think I lead that service.

David: I remember it continued to pour right up to almost game time. We'd had our meeting with Eugene McCarthy, and we came out and went up into the stands, and as we did so, the clouds all drifted away and the sun came out! And the game went on as scheduled.

Deborah: We really came to count on that. We were married in July of '68 in an indoor service in a friend's home, but then the reception was all outdoors on a hillside overlooking the Hudson River in my hometown. The weather forecasts were a bit iffy, but there were quite a number of Druids in attendance in Tarrytown for the wedding the next day. We had a Druid service the night before, rather than the morning, and it was a gorgeous day. It was just perfect! So by that time I think we'd come to count on the weather magic as something that somehow we had found our way into. We didn't quite know how, but it was reliable.

Eric: I'm reminded of the anecdotes in the *Chronicles* about the efficacy of the Curse that David Fisher invoked at one time: anti-Druids coming to great harm, and something to do with a lightning bolt.

David: There are a couple of different stories in there. One had to do with cursing the weather and nearly being struck by lightning, so therefore saying, "Be careful with this." Another

had to do with laying a curse on the anti-Druids, the result of which was that one of them did sprain an ankle. And this was taken to be a sign.

So, yeah: when things like this start to happen, you begin to raise questions about what's really going on.

Deborah: And again I would say, looking back on it, that was not an easy time to think (never mind talk) about the supernatural or the transcendent among our peers. We were uncomfortable doing it even in explicitly traditional religious contexts. The official religion of the College was very intellectual. That was one of the things about the sermons in the Chapel services, both before and after the end of the Religious Requirement: if you didn't know that you were in Chapel, and if they hadn't been shorter than 70 minutes, it would have been hard to tell the difference between a lecture and a sermon at Carleton.

David: Lectures didn't normally have a choral accompaniment.

Deborah: Right, and they lasted longer, but the basic presentation style was rational argument. Perhaps somewhat fewer facts than were presented in a Bio lab, but basically you were intended to deal with this mostly with your intellect, rather than with your gut or your psyche or any of those things.

Getting out there on the Hill, in the weather, did what I would now call "pulling us out of our heads" so that we could react with our whole selves. That was a good thing, and I think we recognized that.

David: And for me at least, as I did more studying of Buddhism, the part of Buddhism that became increasingly intriguing was Zen. Of course, there was a lot of Zen going around at the time. It was a faddy sort of thing. Alan Watts was writing his book. But still there was something very compelling about that point of view that challenged the purely intellectual approach to reality, that there were realities that were not purely rational. We had to acknowledge that and deal with them in some way. I think part of what we were doing, sometimes tongue in cheek, sometimes not, was saying, "look, there is more going on here than you can deal with in pure logic."

Deborah: We had also done something rather wise by declaring early on I don't know whether this was Fisher or a consensus, that Druidism was compatible with any other religion, and every other religion, even if the other religions denied that. (We weren't sure how the Roman Catholic Church felt about this claim of ours.) We were, in a sense, laying claim to a kind of quest that was possible to anyone without having to burn any bridges. I think that fits with some of the Zen explorations that a lot of us were doing at the same time: that there was more than one way to get at truth.

David: It fits with Zen. It also, I think, was a reflection of our feeling, many of us on campus, whether we were Druids or not, that one of the main things that was wrong with traditional Western religion was the exclusivity of it: that you had to be one particular brand, and that if you were that particular brand, then you couldn't be any other brand. In order to become a particular denomination, you'd have to renounce all the others. Many of us believed that this was simply not true, particularly as we began studying the Japanese approach to religion, which is very eclectic.

Deborah: And syncretic; you can be as many things as you want simultaneously.

David: That's right. As they became of new religious traditions, they tended to just incorporate them. Except for Christianity, because the Christians wouldn't let them! It's a great loss,

both to the Japanese and to Christianity. But many of us reacted that that's the approach that makes sense. Why not welcome in as much as you can? Therefore, it really did become an article of the faith that you could be a Druid and you could be *anything else you wanted* and it was fine with us.

David Fisher had some problems with that, I have to say. Particularly as he approached the end of his Carleton experience and began looking ahead to the possibility, the probability, of going to seminary. He was afraid that the people who admit people to seminary would not agree with our point of view, and wanted to resign his orders and withdraw from Druidism.

The rest of us simply told him that that was not possible. His being a Druid was part of who he was; it was part of his life experience. It was not a question of rules. It was simply not logically possible to renounce that or to abandon it. As far as we were concerned, he was always going to be a Druid. He could believe whatever he wanted, but he was always going to be a Druid, and that was that.

Eric: We talked a few times about Dave working on the *Chronicles*. When did that come into final form? Was that before you became Arch-Druid those were all finished?

David: Yes, I believe that was all put together finally in the spring of '64. I remember putting out a little pamphlet, "The Song of the Earth," which had excerpts from the various books. By the time that pamphlet came out, I had the shape of the five books, and mostly written and figured out what was going to go into the various pieces of it. Some things got added later. The last chapter of the *Latter Chronicles* was written by Norman Nelson and contributed fairly late in the game, and it just seemed like a natural way to wrap up the *Latter Chronicles*. But by spring of '64 I had figured out what the five books were going to be and basically what was going in each one. I had been working on them all through that year, which may explain some of the grades that I got that year, but those grades may also be explained by the fact that my father died during that period.

I dearly wanted to be able to put it in people's hands. I wanted there to be a *real* scripture, that people could carry around with them the way they carried Bibles around. Not just a pretend scripture, but something really *in print*. Again, this was part of making the whole thing legitimate and real. But there were real, practical production problems in that period. We did not have plain paper copiers.

Deborah: We did have a mimeograph machine that belonged to KARL.

David: No, it belonged to student government.

Deborah: It belonged to student government, but we had access to it because we used it to produce the Noon News Bulletin.

David: Well, I was the official campus mimeograph operator.

Deborah: That's right.

David: People could prepare stencils for campus organizations and functions, and leave them in a box where I would collect them, and I did this, oh, three times a week, I would collect these stencils and run them off, and they were charged at a piece rate to the organization. In the case of the Druids, since we didn't have an account with CSA, we did have to pay cash money for the things that I ran off.

Deborah: For which we passed a hat, as I recall.

David: Not as part of the service. We did not engage in passing filthy lucre around as part of a Druid service. It was not

appropriate. But off on the side you could. Some of the materials I donated, and I got other people to help me. We would buy a ream of paper: a "printing" of the *Chronicles* was a ream of paper, because we would buy a ream and then use it. It was cheaper. I donated my labor. Otherwise, if we had to get the paper from the CSA stocks, then the whole charge would be higher.

Getting all those stencils cut was a very time-consuming process.

Deborah: Figuring out how the pages went together on the stencils was exciting.

David: For the *Chronicles* that was not such a problem, because those were full size 8+ by 11 sheets. The pamphlets were a little more complicated, because you had to get it to work out right when you folded it over and cut it.

I typed most of the *Chronicles* myself. I would make typos, and then you had to get out the correction fluid and fill in the holes and wait for it to dry and then retype it.

Deborah: All manual typewriters, of course.

David: All manual typewriters. We did have an electric typewriter. Was it electric? Maybe it wasn't. No, it was just a big old clunky manual.

Deborah: That big old clunky manual. It was a good quality manual, but it was old.

David: The *Chronicles* were all done on the KARL typewriter.

Deborah: Right.

David: The same one we used for the Noon News Bulletin, which was also done on mimeograph stencils. That had nothing to do with Druids, other than the fact that it was the same typewriter, and often the same typist. We would take the news off the UPI wire each day. It would be the 11:00 [news], the latest headlines, the latest Dow Jones averages, get them in, get the Bulletin reproduced, and then we had . . .

Deborah: . . . runners that went to the dining halls, which didn't open until noon.

David: One person for each dining hall would grab these copies and bring them there. They were let in early so that they could put them on all the tables. It was quite a production. I don't know how many years that went on. Tremendous logistics involved in getting that Bulletin out every day.

But it took me a long time to get the stencils made for the *Chronicles*. I believe they were ready, I think we had the first printing by Beltane of '64.

Deborah: Yes, I think that's right.

David: Then we carefully preserved the stencils so that we could do later printings. There was a printing history in the inside cover of each copy of the *Chronicles*. Those early editions were all done from the same set of stencils. The only stencil we would change would be the one that had the printing history on it. Everything else was kept the same; once the typos were in there, and there are some errors in the cross-references, once they got in there, too bad! We weren't going to go through all that again!

Eric: By the time, David, that you became Arch-Druid, you started to have graduation of former Druids, and the issue would come up of people who had been Druids at the Carleton Grove going off and continuing their Druidism at other Groves, founding other Groves. I don't know what the history of that is at all, but perhaps you can say something about the founding of Groves elsewhere beyond Carleton.

Deborah: Norman was the first.

David: Norman was the first, yes. He was the first of our initial group of three to graduate, and he wrote back that he had found some kindred souls in South Dakota and was in the process of forming a Grove there. I don't know whether he ever really officially founded a Grove or not, but he was the first one to raise the question of how would one go about doing this, and we had some correspondence to that effect. There seems to be a logical problem here. In order to have a service and to admit new members to Druidism, they had to partake of the Waters of Life. This was really the only requirement for First Order, to partake of the Waters of Life and subscribe to the Basic Tenets. How could you do that if you didn't have enough people to officiate at a service? Didn't you, after all, have to have an Arch-Druid and a Preceptor and a Server, and they all had to be at least First Order? If you didn't have those people, how could you have a service, and therefore have legitimately consecrated Waters and admit new members?

Well, it seemed to me that he was just putting up unnecessary obstacles, that there was nothing that required any of this stuff. I talked it over with David Fisher, and we came up with the notion that, well, really, all you had to do was to have a Third Order there to conduct the service. We came up, really, with the notion of a Mission, almost. In the Episcopal Church, you have established churches, and you have missions. In other words, you could have a missionary go out and set up a mission. This was a slightly different class of organization than an established church, or in our case, an established Grove. A Mission could be conducted simply by having any Third Order, and the Third Order could consecrate the Waters of Life.

We did have the notion that you couldn't really have a Druid service with only one person. This didn't make any sense. You had to have at least two. If you didn't have an elected Preceptor, Server, and all that stuff, the other people present could as a group do the responsive parts of the service. The answers, that the Preceptor would normally give, could just be done by everyone present. Therefore, having Waters of Life was no problem at all, and once you had Waters of Life, then you could have First Orders, Second Orders, and everything flowed from that. When you wanted to, you could adopt a constitution and create a new Grove.

Our model for this was essentially the CSA model. You want to have a legitimate organization? Write a constitution; adopt it. We have forms for you; you just use the same constitution that Carleton uses. We'll just fill in the blanks: instead of saying "Carleton College," it could say "South Dakota" or "New York," or whatever you wanted it to say. Same three officers; you really only needed to have three people to have a legitimate Grove, because then you had a person to fill each office. We didn't think it was quite legitimate to have the same person fill two offices; that wasn't right. So you need at least three people, and then you could have your constitution, you could have your Grove.

In the original tradition, you had to be an Arch-Druid of a properly constituted Grove in order to admit other Druids to the Third Order. I know David Fisher and I felt that that number three was important in terms of demonstrating that you really had gotten something going, that it wasn't just one person out there playing games, that there really was interest. Unless you had those three people out there, there was something that wasn't quite right about having somebody creating other priests.

I guess that's a tradition that has been somewhat modified over the years, but initially at least, you had to get another

Grove going before you could legitimately call yourself an Arch-Druid, before you could then consecrate other priests.

Deborah: To backtrack a little: some of this, Norman's desire to create another Grove, also contributed to this reappraisal, once the religious requirement was gone, about what we were doing here. There was some initial discussion about whether you could be a Druid away from Carleton. Norman obviously had a strong desire and interest to be able to continue to be a Druid while not resident here, and he was really the first person for whom that became a pressing issue. But that was another way in which we got to take a look at this question of what does it mean to say that you're a Druid, and what does it mean to be practicing as Druids. I recall that, particularly some of the times when Norman would come back, because he wasn't that far away, and Betsy was still here, so he would come back not infrequently, considering, that was one of the things we talked about: did it have to be the *same* at other places as it was at Carleton? South Dakota never did get to be that important, but I think that was kind of foreshadowing of some of the issues that came up later, in the Seventies, in particular, and other places.

David: I made an attempt to establish another Grove at my summer camp, where I was a member of the staff. This was a Boy Scout camp, Camp Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan. The camp itself is in northern Wisconsin and serves a Boy Scout Council in the North Shore suburbs of Chicago. I actually did have about eight or so people there: other members of the staff, for the most part high school students, and so very impressionable. They were willing to follow my lead, and they expressed an interest, and we had several services in the course of the summer.

Two of that number expressed an interest in becoming Third Order, and I did consecrate them, sort of in absentia, because by the time they decided they wanted to do that, it was already the end of the summer and we were going our different ways. I wanted some sense that they had some idea what was going on here, so I asked them to write to me some things about their reflections on Druidism before I would agree to the consecration. Since I was not going to be at camp the following summer (I was going to be in Japan), I allowed them to consecrate each other in my name. I don't think they ever did anything with it. I lost touch with both of them after I graduated from Carleton, so the Grove didn't really continue there.

But it did pop up in some other places, in particular in the San Francisco Bay area and Berkeley. One of our Druids here, Bob Larson (whom we always called "Larse") . . .

Deborah: Who was probably the first real Celtic hobbyist among us.

David: Yes, he was definitely a Celtic hobbyist. He determined that we were pronouncing a whole bunch of things wrong, and we continued to pronounce them wrong, and it was fine.

Deborah: But he didn't.

David: Right, he always pronounced them in an authentic way. I could never get the accent right, so I gave up. He was one of the people that David Fisher was very suspicious of. He was afraid that Larse was *really* taking this all much too seriously. And perhaps he was, who knows? That's his problem. I did consecrate Larse to the Third and Sixth Orders, and then he went off to Berkeley.

Deborah: Having flunked out of Carleton in his final trimester.

David: Yes, he never actually did graduate.

Deborah: But Berkeley was a good place to be at that point. By the time we arrived, a year or so later, he had hooked up with Isaac.

David: Right. We both wound up in San Francisco because I went into the army after Carleton, and through just pure dumb luck got assigned to the Presidio in San Francisco. So in 1968 I was at the Presidio, and we were married and set up housekeeping out there. I don't remember quite how . . . I think Larse found us.

Deborah: Marriage announcement in the *Voice*, or something like that.

David: And so Larse introduced us to Isaac, whom he had by then consecrated to the Third Order, and they had a Grove going in Berkeley. We attended a number of services over there, at various hillsides overlooking the campus.

Deborah: That Grove was *my* introduction to Neo-Paganism. That was not a word we used when I was here, but the Berkeley Grove was definitely Neo-Pagan. I remember one service on a hillside in Berkeley in which Isaac called upon a great number of gods and goddesses and spirits by name, and I am quite sure they were there, and was far less comfortable with their presence than I perhaps would be now. [This] was another one of these moments of "what in heck have we gotten ourselves into?" Isaac was a very powerful presence, wherever Isaac was; small rooms, large mountain tops, it didn't really matter.

David: One of the things we were doing with Druidism [was] being very vague with people about whether we took this seriously or not.

Deborah: That was part of the appropriate Third Order stance!

David: Right. The idea was always keep everybody guessing. Well, Isaac picked up on that in spades, and we never did really know whether Isaac believed this stuff or not. I mean, at moments there would be the tongue-in-cheek approach to it all that we really recognized as being very much Carleton "good hume" type approach, and at other times it seemed very real. I don't to this day pretend to know what Isaac was really doing. Eventually he took the stance that Druidism should put itself squarely in the Neo-Pagan camp. Those of us who had experienced Carleton Druidism really could not buy that. I think the main problem with it was that it was becoming exclusive again. It was shutting things out, at least by implication. We could not be squarely in any camp, except our own.

Deborah: There could be Groves whose practice was Neo-Pagan and whose membership was heavily Neo-Pagan, but that was not to say that those Groves were better or worse, merely different from other Groves. There was sort of a suggestion, it seems to me, that the Neo-Pagan Groves were taking Druidism where it was supposed to go, and that was the piece that we resented and resisted.

David: I don't think, personally, that the things they were adding were any more legitimately Druid than whatever things we had added. I think Isaac would argue that they were, because *they* were really Neo-Pagan and the Druids were pagan. But they were various kinds of mythology and anthropology that he had collected from goodness knows where.

Deborah: Just as badly documented as the early stuff we used!

David: Right! So there was quite a controversy about that, which Dick probably could speak to a lot better than we can, because he was in the middle of much of it. Since this is not a

videotape, we should mention that Dick Shelton is sitting in the back of the room listening to this.

Eric: We did an interview with Dick, this past spring I believe, and went into the Isaac wars to some extent.

David: I don't know that I need to add very much to that, except that we were very much in touch with Isaac and Larse during 1969-1970. In the summer of 1971 we went off to Germany, where I had a job with the US government, and basically lost touch with them during that period. Occasional correspondence, but not terribly aware of what was going on, except as the result of the correspondence that we got through Dick.

Deborah: It is worth mentioning, in terms of the Carleton connection, that although we finally met Dick just yesterday, that it was through the Carleton connection that we got to know him and Ellen, mostly through correspondence back when these issues arose, and that we have always been able to find each other through the College directories and so on. That was part of how we became involved, at least tangentially, in some of these issues; not only as people who were physically present in the San Francisco Bay area and trying to figure out what we were going to do in relation to Isaac, but also in terms of this larger question, which Dick was dealing with . . . by that time I think you were in Ann Arbor, if I'm not mistaken?

Dick: Yes.

Deborah: This question of could there be legitimate Groves in the Seventies that were not Neo-Pagan, and what was the stance of Carleton as the Mother Grove, and what kind of authority lay here, and so on. That was probably of continuing importance to us, even though we at that point were no longer practicing Druids. [We] identified as Druids, but there was no real community to practice in.

Eric: In a formalistic sense, of course, the Council of Dalon ap Landu is continuing. You have membership on that, and if any body has to decide these questions, at that time that's the duly constituted body.

Deborah: Right. That was one of the interesting questions. When you got people like Isaac, who had no tie to Carleton directly, except through Druidism, how do you find people who are Third Order and therefore members of the Council. As long as we were all Carls, there was a fair degree of trust that we would that we would always be able to track each other down. This sense that somehow, in the course of following the nature of Druidism, we'd gotten people in there who didn't buy into the same kinds of values and, just, who were different, raised certain kinds of uneasiness, that I think were independent of the personalities involved.

David: I think I had an early sense that, whatever happened with Druidism, it was going to tend to revolve around Carleton. The Council early resolved that the Arch-Druid of Carleton would be the ex-officio Chair of the Council, in the belief that that most likely to be the most workable approach; that if we had the focus go anywhere else, it would probably get lost.

Deborah: Yes.

David: And think that over time, events have borne that out.

Deborah: That the communication channels that run through or around the College serve us well.

David: The College itself provides nice services in that regard.

Deborah: As this interview attests!

David: And we always tell everyone if you lose track of us, simply call the Carleton Alumni Office. Even if we don't let anyone else know where we are, we will always let the College know. That's a promise.

Another Grove that was founded, and I believe flourished for a while, was started by Dick Smiley at Purdue. I know he did have a number of followers there. He conducted services regularly for several years. We have clippings from Purdue newspapers identifying some of the services that he conducted there, and he did admit people to the Third Order. That was without adding Neo-Paganism or much of anything else, I believe, other than what Dick wanted to make up.

Deborah: More importance laid on the solstice perhaps than some other practitioners, but that was *perfectly* consistent.

Michael Scharding: My father remembers Dick Smiley just from reading clippings saying somebody was always having a huge bonfire. It was always Dick.

Eric: You say that after a certain point you were no longer practicing Druids, but [in] 1982 you were going to make a visit back to campus, and you had an ad run saying that Druids were coming back to campus and you'd be happy to meet with interested people. That had the effect of starting up I believe what had become largely a defunct Grove again.

Deborah: I had had continuing relationships with the College. In fact, in 1978, shortly after we got back from Germany, I came here in the summer for a week-long course for alumni that was something the College was experimenting with at the time. Even though it was, I believe, July, there were enough students on campus, and I found some poster that there was going to be a Druid service on that Saturday. So I went to a service that was *fairly* recognizable to me, but that did exist, and which I enjoyed. That was when I discovered that in the Seventies it had become pretty normal for the Arch-Druid to be a woman, which was, as we've said, very contrary to our previous practice.

But then somewhere between then and fall of '81, I joined the Alumni Board and attended three meetings that year; then was off the Board for a year, but involved with development work, so I came for at least one meeting during that; and then got back on the Board for two years. So I began a period of being on campus from one to four times a year, for about five years there. I did that again some years later for my 25th reunion committee, but it was particularly at that period in the early Eighties when we were doing that. And I was getting the *Carletonian* as a member of the Alumni Board; I received the *Tonian* regularly. In one of those issues there was a letter to the editor bemoaning the demise of the Druids at Carleton, and did anybody know what happened to the Druids? So we wrote back.

David: As I recall, that letter was particularly concerned with the valuable functions that the Druids had performed in providing decent weather on the weekends for arbing.

Deborah: The spring Board meeting was very close to Beltane, because I remember we had our daughter's first birthday on that trip as well, so it was the spring of '82. We were going on to visit other family in the Midwest, so David and Joel came with me, as well as Judith (whom I had brought to all the Board meetings because she was a nursing infant). This was very good timing, in terms of this letter showing up in the *Tonian* and our response to it, announcing that we would in fact be here and would be glad to re-establish the tradition.

David: I don't know if we took out an ad; I think we sent another letter back.

Deborah: I think we sent a letter back that was then run in the *Tonian*, and we were approached on the strength of that. Or we may also have written to whoever had signed that first letter, because we had his name, and you could just write in care of the College. So we didn't start this, but we responded eagerly to this initial stimulus. We met with people here.

David: We had a discussion in Sayles-Hill. Several people attended that and expressed an interest, and we talked about Druidism and all.

Deborah: The discussion was advertised on campus in some way or other; flyers or something. I don't remember that anymore.

David: So I said, well, is anyone interested in having a service? Yes, there was interest in doing that, so we held a service on the Hill of the Three Oaks. And then also raised the question: you really want to get this thing started again; is anybody willing to do a vigil? And sure enough, we had three volunteers.

Deborah: I think these were all people who lived in Farmhouse?

David: No; Bob Nieman lived in Farmhouse, I believe.

Deborah: In any case, we were at least partly tapping into some of the then still relatively new (by our lights) ecological and nature interests.

David: Bob invited us to have dinner at Farmhouse, which was wonderful. Good cooks over there at that time! We had a very pleasant evening with him. Let's see; it was Bob and Tom Lane and Meg Ross.

Deborah: Yes.

David: They all did vigil, and I tromped over there in early morning at dawn and performed the ceremony. This was all very spur of the moment, so I did not have ribbons to present them. They got their ribbons in the mail after I got home.

I believe that it didn't take very well. I didn't get much in the way of correspondence from them; didn't get too much in the way of responses to my letters. I did get a letter from Tom Lane a year or so later, saying, well, they hadn't really done too much.

Deborah: There was a small cache of Paraphernalia, which then ended up in the attic of Farmhouse to be rediscovered later.

David: I don't really have first-hand knowledge of what really happened there.

Deborah: One of the other things in terms of what it means to be a practicing Druid: aside from, I believe, the January '82 Alumni Board meeting, when with the wind-chill factor it was unbelievably cold here (the final Board meeting in Great Hall became exceedingly uncomfortable because we were sitting on metal folding chairs and it didn't matter how much we were wearing by the end of that hour and a half; the room was just unheatable) aside from that, I don't believe I have ever made a visit to campus without going out to the Hill of Three Oaks, whether there were any other Druids that I knew of or not. I suppose in some way that says for me that my Druidism is still anchored at Carleton.

Eric: What is it about Carleton that made it a hospitable environment for Druidism to go on? I know the historical reasons it started here, but is there something about the nature of Carleton itself that, in your view, makes Druidism particularly compatible here?

Deborah: Well, one thing that occurs to me when you ask that is my sense of the Carls I've known well having always a bit of tongue in cheek in thinking about ourselves. We can take ourselves very seriously, but we also have a sense of humor

about ourselves. I think that is a quality that made this perhaps more hospitable to Druidism, in various times, than perhaps some other schools would have been. It may have been an accident that it started here, but then that made it more possible to perpetuate Druidism. The time was ripe in the sense that there was also the beginning of encouragement of intercultural studies, area studies. I think President Nason on the academic level was strongly encouraging; in other words, I think the intellectual climate was getting more hospitable towards the idea that we didn't all have to be white-bread middle-Americans. For those of us who were beginning to get very worried about the idea that when we left Carleton we might have to turn into white-bread middle-Americans, this was very satisfying.

Eric: What about the geography of the campus? Is a place like the Hill of Three Oaks a place of spiritual power because of its significance to the Carleton Druids, or is it a place that has something special about it regardless of Druidic associations?

Deborah: I think that's one of these chicken-and-egg questions. As far as we know, it had no name before the Druids called it the Hill of the Three Oaks. That was one of the things people used to give us grief about at first. When we'd announced that we had meetings on the Hill of the Three Oaks, they would insist that not only that we didn't exist, but that *it* didn't exist. We've been very gratified by the fact that *that* at least has become enshrined in the maps, that it's properly recorded.

David: I think the fact of the Arb is very important. It's just impossible for me to imagine something like this starting up, say, at a place like Macalester.

Deborah: Or if we had just the Bald Spot. That wouldn't have done it.

David: I don't think Druidism could flourish meeting in rooms with chairs. It needs to happen outdoors somewhere. I think in all the various other Groves that have been started, that that was a significant component, that they had to meet outdoors somewhere. There are wonderful places above the campus at Berkeley in the Oakland Hills, in the Berkeley Hills, to hold services like this, and I just don't think you can do it without that kind of setting. So the very existence of the Arb was, I think, crucial.

Deborah: Yes.

David: Because I think we all did believe, and do believe, that Nature and an awareness of the world around us, an awareness of Nature as an organic whole is important to us spiritually. You cannot get away from that and have a complete spiritual life. We weren't talking ecology yet at that time, but again, if you look at the history of what was going on in the world, this was at about the same time that awareness of ecology began to be running through the rest of society. Whether Carleton was the right place or not, the *time* was right.

Deborah: And the place was appropriate, in terms of the Arb and the spirit.

David: And I think also, as Deborah has said, that a very important element of Druidism for us, and I think part of what has kept the spark alive, or has allowed it to return over the years, is the sense of not taking ourselves *too* seriously. A meaningful spiritual life is one which has a significant component of humor, of having fun together, of enjoying each other's fun, and enjoying each other's company. That's something that I associate with being a Carl, what life at Carleton is like, at least for the people I associated with. We've often said that we never met a Carl we didn't like. There's perhaps one

exception to that, but in general, when we have gotten together with other Carleton people where we've had no previous association, and the thing that we have in common is the Carleton Experience, though sometimes separated by decades, we still find that same spark of humor, of having a good time together, much of which is intellectually based: good banter, ability to kick ideas around and have fun with them.

Deborah: Sounds like Druidism to me.

David: Druidism is of a piece with Carleton in that sense. Not to say that there aren't other places that can have that same experience, but it is definitely something that has happened here, and is part of at least our sense of what Druidism is all about.

Michael: I'd like to ask a question. Would you consider the Carleton Druids to be a fraternity attempt at Carleton? With alcohol, big parties, secret rites . . .

David: No.

Deborah: No. David can speak in terms of the men who were involved in the early period, but one of the things that was characteristic of our Druid times here was that alcohol was used very sparingly in Druid rites. Alcohol, for all that we drank, was probably used less, and abused less, in that period in the early Sixties than it was maybe in the succeeding half-decade, when pot also arrived on campus in significant quantities in the late Sixties and early Seventies. Our partying, if you will, the big festivals for the Druids then, have to me a very innocent quality. The party was the fire, the fellowship, the seriousness and silliness of things like the fortune-telling, and about a shot of alcohol shared with everyone who was present. And that was all we drank together, as Druids. Some of us were also friends, and maybe partied elsewhere.

David: We also didn't put much emphasis on secrecy. I don't recall any attempt to keep anything secret from anyone else. The services were always open. There is this pretense of passing on the lore, what some of the words mean, if you go through the Third Order ordination service, but if somebody else wanted to get up at dawn and come up there on the Hill and attend the service, that was fine with us.

Deborah: Right.

David: We were not keeping anything secret from anyone, or "passing on the mysteries." It didn't have that quality at all. Perhaps if there had been fraternities and sororities and things here, there wouldn't have been the time or energy to make up the silly rituals; I don't know. Maybe our focus would have been drained off in that direction, so in that sense there may be a connection. But I don't think we were trying to create a fraternity substitute.

Deborah: Even implicitly. I don't think so. There were some contexts the '*Tonian*', KARL, Players, where there were intimate sub-communities among Carleton students, because people worked together in intensive ways, and I think for some people who were not as deeply involved in any of those, that was certainly one of the attractions of Druidism. It was another place where you could get together with people and have some continuity without having to study together and stuff. But I don't think that was particularly conscious either. That also wasn't why you joined the '*Tonian*' or Players.

David: I didn't mention, in terms of why I came to Carleton, one of the attractions (I don't know that it was the deciding factor) was the absence of fraternities. I didn't feel that fraternities

were an appropriate thing to be doing with my college time. I don't know that I'd thought all this out before actually arriving on campus, but by the time I'd been here a while, I believe my sense was that these naturally forming interest groups were a much more appropriate way to form community and to have a sense of bonding than fraternities would have been (which always struck me as highly artificial). I was sort of intrigued by the notion of fraternities, secret rites, and all that sort of thing, but when it came right down to it, it wasn't what I wanted to do.

Deborah: In many cases, one of my criteria for considering colleges, I would not look at any place with sororities, and places which had fraternities, even though no sororities, were sort of downgraded on my list. That was very practical. In those days, as a Jew, there were too many sororities I would have been excluded from. I had no interest in buying into a society in which people would be excluding me. Druidism would not, even if it had developed that way, would not have had that problem, but I think probably most of us would not have felt very comfortable if it had begun to feel too much like a secret society. Those of us who were here in our time. Except maybe Norman. But he would have done it with great zest for the sheer fun of it.

David: I think most of us who were involved were having too much fun with the theater aspects of it to have gone in for any secrecy.

Deborah: Yes. I hadn't thought of it that way, but I think that's absolutely accurate.

Eric: Other than the people who refused to believe that you existed, and the Goodhue jocks who would destroy the altars (for whatever reason) . . .

Deborah: We believe. This is tradition, but we have no proof.

Eric: ...and administrative hostility, did you experience any hostility toward the Druids as a group from other students, people who were offended by your existence. Particularly the question might relate to existing religious groups on campus, the traditional Carleton religious groups. Did they feel threatened by the Druids, or were there misunderstandings about what the Druids were about?

Deborah: If so, it was damned low-key. I certainly don't remember anything in Canterbury Club. Inter-Varsity wasn't very active.

David: I don't remember any specifics of outright hostility. I had maybe a couple of conversations with people who were essentially fundamentalist Christians who believed that dabbling in any of this kind of thing was dangerous and sinful and dealing with the devil. The sort of people who are uncomfortable with Hallowe'en costumes.

Deborah: Took the spirits far more seriously than we did do.

David: Right. But there are always such people around, and they have their point of view. I didn't think that was particularly meaningful.

Deborah: It wasn't very common as a stance at Carleton when we were here. Certainly not the people we hung out with.

David: I suspect that there were more fundamentalist or nearly fundamentalist Christians than we were aware of. It was certainly less popular at that time to express that point of view openly, but *somebody* continued to go to Chapel on Sunday morning, even after it wasn't required.

Eric: Well, I'd like perhaps as a way to bring this to closure, to probe for some reflections on your part about what Druidism has meant in your own lives, how it has informed your

subsequent philosophies and outlooks and altered things for you.

David: I think one thing that's definitely been true: what started out in some ways as a practical matter of being as incorporating as possible, of not wanting to do anything that would turn somebody off, of trying to be as welcoming as possible (part of that was we were trying to get people to join!) turned into a philosophical stance that I now believe very strongly: that a proper outlook on spiritual journey is to be as inclusive and accepting as possible. It doesn't mean you don't make judgments about things; it doesn't mean you don't sort out for yourself what you choose to believe and what you don't choose to believe. But to be open to ideas and to be as accepting of other people and their belief systems as possible is just a way of enriching your own life, your own spiritual experience; and I think it's the only way to go about it. That is something that has grown on me. It started out as sort of an official stance for me within Druidism, but has really been very much internalized.

Deborah: I would say something similar, and I think my experience of the last nine years has been even more informed by it. I was essentially becoming a Christian at the same time I was becoming a Druid. I'm not sure how much of that stuff I wanted to believe, but [was] very drawn to the people. One of the things, given my background, was that Carleton was the first place where I found people of faith whom I could respect intellectually, which broke with one of my parents' insistences about the nature of the world.

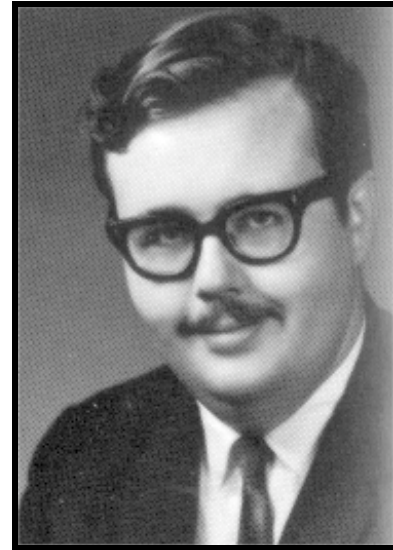
There was a period after I left Carleton where I was spending more energy exploring the Christian faith that was newly mine, but during that period I also began to articulate my one religious and spiritual absolute, the one thing which is always a guiding factor for me, which I see as very Druid: never trust the theology of anyone who cannot laugh at themselves. This has been a wonderful touchstone for a wide variety of groups that I have run into, and was great for clearing away some of the underbrush about people who claim to have hold of the true faith when I was a young Christian. Because it did help me to tell who were the people who were on the wavelength that I was on.

In the last going on ten years, my Christian experience has been very informed by feminism, by lesbian and gay liberation movements, by the spiritual journeys of a number of women that I sort of travel with spiritually (which are not Christian; some of which are Neo-Pagan). There's been kind of a return to Druid roots in this time, and I'm not sure how much of the rather long process of coming to really abandon a patriarchal image of God was informed by Druidism, but I see a continuity there. There have been times when I found it very reassuring to remind myself that this was not the first time that I had called upon God as the Earth-Mother or as the Goddess; that lightning had not struck me then, and that I was probably on the right track now.

There's a real significant sense in which this is a piece of my spiritual journey that I am reclaiming. I lead women's spiritual circle gatherings in a couple of different contexts, and have been conditioned to adding recent feminist and lesbian theology. I've been thinking a lot as I've put together the most recent ones of how comfortable this is for me. I haven't actually gotten out any liturgies; it may be time to do that the next time I lead a circle. So it's both informed by apparently mainstream religious life, and been what I think of as a kind of underground spring for much of my spiritual journey since Carleton, since I became a Third Order Druid; a real source of energy and life.

Interview with Robert Larson '66

April 20th, 1994 c.e.



David: I mentioned in my opening remarks having been raised in the Presbyterian Church. Subsequent to that I did seek Confirmation as an Episcopalian, although the service was performed by the old Catholic bishop of Germany, which I rather like, because things were just murky and open-ended and as eclectic as possible. One of the things that I continue to find congenial about the Episcopal Church is that, at least in its better moments, it does seem to allow for things to be pretty much open-ended. We believe that it's better to remain in dialogue, even when we disagree with each other; it's better to allow the possibility of different and multiple answers to fundamental questions than to try to nail down *the* truth or *the* single Truth. We've just experienced evidence of that this weekend; we're in Minnesota to attend the consecration of our former rector from San Francisco as Episcopal bishop of Minnesota. There was a protest on the floor of the hall during that ceremony over the fact that this man has announced that he will ordain practicing gay and lesbian people.

Deborah: Non-celibate.

David: That he will allow within the diocese the blessing of same-sex relationships. (He still won't call them marriages because there are legal ramifications having to do with the use of that word.) But these were very controversial positions. They seem in some people's opinions to be directly in conflict with resolutions in the House of Bishops. How can the House of Bishops say one thing and then turn around and allow a person who holds a differing view to be consecrated as a bishop? Well, I think that's delightful. Why not allow that to happen? Why not allow things to remain open-ended and murky; because I think that's the only way that we can continue to move toward anything that would be spiritually malleable for us.

Eric: All right. I thank you very much for the time you've spent with me, and for your memories and reflections and thoughtfulness. Unless you have anything else to say, I think I'll declare this interview closed.

Deborah: It's been a pleasure.

David: Thank you.



**Figure 2 Fisher, Frangquist & Larson, c. 1964
at Monument Hill.**

Mike: I am Michael Scharding, class of 1994, and I am interviewing Robert Larson, who was an important Druid because he knew the ways of the original Carleton Druids and also the ways of the Berkeley Druids. Robert founded the Berkeley Druids and thereby with Isaac, he set the stage for the birth of the Neo-Pagan Druid movement in America in 1969. As Archdruid of Berkeley 1969-1977, his views will help us to understand the Berkeley Grove during the troubling times.

Robert: Hi, everybody!

Mike: You're probably the only Third Order Druid from Carleton who I've not phoned, talked to or written to yet.

Robert: Well, congratulations.

Mike: Except Fisher.

Robert: Well, yeah.

Mike: You're also the only Druid to have known most of the competitors in the New and Reformed Druid movements. So you'll be helpful to my paper. Let's start off with what you remember of the early Founding Days and how you came to find the Druids at Carleton.

Robert: Ah, well, that was my Sophomore year. 62-63. I was at, I think, the second service. I made it to most of the services thereafter. Have you talked to Fisher? Fisher won't talk?

Mike: Fisher won't talk.

Robert: That figures. With the ideotheos of young intellectual people, you come up with strange ways of passing the time. The early 60s they still had the religious requirement in force. That went out about 65. That's when you had to go to a certain number of services every term and they made it pretty easy though. It was all nicely hypocritical. At any rate, David Fisher's method of rebellion was forming secret societies, which never really took off.

Mike: Oh, I didn't know there were other secret societies.

Robert: Well, he had a couple others that he tried to get off the ground beforehand. Nothing ridiculous or outrageous, but they were illegal by the laws of the college at that time.

Mike: One of things that Bonewits mentioned is whether Fisher was a member of the United Ancient Order of Druids.

Robert: I have no idea. I don't believe he was. I have no idea of what was in his background.

Mike: Ah. But what you said there made me suspicious.

Robert: Well, no. It was just his method of rebelling against college regulations. We all had our own ways. Mostly sneaking girls into the guys' dorms and getting drunks. But there were other ways, as Fisher never had much of a head for alcohol and he was planning on becoming a minister, it was just his way of rebelling, I guess. I really didn't know Dave that well, and we didn't get along that well. At any rate, he came up with this Druid thing to resist the Chapel requirement, the idea being that when we put in our religious slips we'd write down the Druid thing, and if they accepted it it would prove that the religious requirement was absolutely ridiculous, and if they denied it we could claim religious discrimination. Funny thing was when the men put it in, it was denied, but when the women put it in, the women's dean said "fine."

Mike: What happened there, according to Deeborah Frangquist, is that the slips were checked by dorm mothers over at the women's places. And they didn't know anything and they said, "whatever. pass. whatever. pass."

Robert: Well, I know one guy, who was not a Druid, named Bob Miller who was getting by putting in things like the "Wesleyan Presbyterian and Fire Reform of Colorado" and they were getting accepted. But we had trouble with the Dean, but that was straightened out. Most of us covered our butts by going to the Sunday night lecture any way, which was a painless way of fulfilling the religious requirement. At any rate, there we were in 63 and we went away and came back the next year. For some reason, people found something in it, people on a religious search or philosophical search, kids trying to find their basis of being. "Roll your own religion" has always had an attraction to me, and I rolled my own. At first year, you had Fisher as ArchDruid & Howie Cherniack as Preceptor and we had various servers, but it eventually came down to Frangquist. He eventually became Preceptor and then Archdruid after Fisher had left, and I was his Preceptor for a while. Anything else you need to know of the early days?

Mike: What was your idea of what the RDNA meant to you at that time?

Robert: As I say, it's a nice excuse to get out in the woods on Saturday, but I've always looked at it as a way to search for philosophical/ethical/religious truth. Of course, the search is more important than the finding in those cases. The search led you in various directions. Nature is the focal point. My personal predilection even at that time, although in the introductory state, was in Celtic language, history and practices. I've always had a taste for the obscure.

Mike: I know what you mean.

Robert: Among Northern Europeans, the Celtic mythos was one of the more obscure and one of the more puzzling. I always had a tendency for the pagan religion, but most of my formative experiences were influenced by Nordic traditions. The Celt mythos & ethos & worldview is more conducive to my particular soul. There are many more good books now coming out, but at that time there was very little available and you just had to get your information where you could and I

had always been interested in that culture since the age of 12, although for no reason that I could figure out. It's just one of those things, I mean, where do your interests come from? It didn't really become focused until I was in my 20's and since then I've tried to pick up everything I could find on it, which is fairly good. I did more than a bit of work on Muenster Gaelic and now I can..... (long discourse on languages)

Mike: So you graduated in 65?

Robert: No, I didn't graduate...

Mike: Oh, you didn't graduate, what happened?

Robert: Loss of interest mainly. The final term I was laid up with one sprained ankle on another. I was majoring in English, which was interesting, but not overwhelmingly interesting. I just couldn't see working that hard. The general academic atmosphere just got to me.

Mike: I know that the Third Order was pretty much fixed at this point.

Robert: You mean in the ritual and how you became a Third Order?

Mike: Yes, I think so.

Robert: Yeah, it was pretty much fixed. As far as I know, it was fixed when Fisher ordained his first one, Nelson or Frangquist, I can't remember which was first. The ritual has not changed that much since, in order to keep some ilk of apostolic succession going.

Mike: And did you have the traditional curse of having it rain on your vigil?

Robert: No. But on my vigil, it was colder than an Eskimo's outhouse and I couldn't get my fire going. I found some deadfall in one of the thickets, and I had a nice staff that I was trying to whittle on to pass the time. It was a cold one. Eventually the dawn came, after I was walking around for awhile slapping my arms to my side for two hours, saying "When the f*ck is Frangquist going to show up?" Just as dawn came, off to the west from the Hill of Three Oaks, where I stood my vigil, was a nice lightning bolt striking the ground in the shape of my staff.

Mike: Wow!

Robert: Wasn't that a lucky thing? Fortunately there was no thunder at the time of the ordination!

Mike: Yes, I know we had to do that with the ordination of one of my friends. There was a lightning storm going on and every time it thundered we had to start it all over again.

Robert: That's one way to do it.

Mike: By the end of it, I was speaking 6 times the ordinary rate.

Robert: The way we would have done it is, "Well we're going to have to do this again." Because, at that point, we were taking it halfway seriously. Still got snow on the ground out there?

Mike: I'd say no, but if I do then we'll get another foot in the morning.

Robert: Oh, I know. Minnesota weather sucks.

Mike: We've had six or seven springs so far.

Robert: Has the Cannon River flooded yet?

Mike: Oh, you should have seen it last July! You know it was my fault. I ordained two people that night in July. There was a backlog for ten years when no one was third order and so when Shelton came down and ordained me, absolutely everyone wanted to catch up before they left.

Robert: Oh that's good. A new crop.

Mike: So, two people wanted to be ordained, and I think that was too much, and we got the Flood.

Robert: I ordained two on one night once. The problem out here is that we separated them, otherwise the vision quest doesn't go down, but making two or three visits each night, they were about a mile apart. It was one of those nights. We had a crazy Christian up in the hills back then. Never again will I try two in one night. It wasn't convenient to go home and lie on my own bed while they vigiled, because then I would have to make a mile or two mile hike to check up on them. So I had to stay up all night too...even though I'm a night person...

Mike: I've so far ordained 8 people and I've never been able to sleep on those nights.

Robert: No, you're concerned for them.

Mike: Yeah, you're concerned for them. So you trot out and check up on them, even if they don't see you.

Robert: Well, yeah, it's always the nice thing to do to give them a scare around 12:00.

Mike: A scare? Oh no!

Robert: Oh, yes, it's part of the vision quest. If you're in fairly dense woods, it's almost impossible not to give them a scare tracking through the goddamned underbrush. It's about 1 o'clock at night when things are getting a bit hairy. It's a matter of getting their adrenaline going, which at that time they can probably use to keep awake.

Mike: Sometimes, I don't know about you guys.

Robert: We're a little crazy. If you're half-way intelligent, you're already crazy. If you aren't crazy by the time you're 20, the world will drive you crazy by the time you're 30. I never really intentionally scared anybody, because I'm the type if you snuck up behind me and startled me, I'd jump up about three feet in the air. Most people are that way, especially in the woods at night.

Mike: You left in what year then?

Robert: Spring of 66, after winter term.

Mike: That was when Frangquist was winding down?

Robert: Yes.

Mike: And most of the rules had been passed?

Robert: Yeah. The originals had gone on.

Mike: During that brief flurry of voting, do you think they expected a vote to happen again?

Robert: I'm sure Fisher didn't.

Mike: I heard he always got pulled into consensus.

Robert: That's an interesting tale there. You're familiar with the stalled patriarchate of the upper orders? It stalled with Zempel at 8th? When they were starting up with the Druids, we thought, "Let's make some more Orders so that we can put more initials after our names." and so it was Fisher, Nelson, Frangquist, Zempel, and Zempel wanted the eighth but he got the seventh.

Mike: I wanted the Eighth!

Robert: Everyone wanted the Eighth or the tenth, because there is all sorts of initiation possibilities. But the idea at that time, that I got from Dave Frangquist, was they wanted to edge Dave Fisher out because he was getting a bit too Christian and so they gave him the honor of being the first patriarch of the Fourth Order. He raised the others up to Fourth order, and they elected the fifth order, and then the sixth Order, and

that's as far as they got until Zempel. Everyone would be appointed to the higher order, but the point would be that Fisher would be the lowest ranking Patriarch. Since he always wore black anyway, he was preparing himself to become an Episcopalian priest. He's always been embarrassed by the whole thing. We once had a science fiction novel with busty broads on the cover and we gave it to him to autograph, and he turned pale at the sight of it.

Mike: So you went off somewhere after Carleton?

Robert: I went home for a while and, let me assure you, living in Indiana is no treat for someone who wants to do something. Well, I went over to Berkeley and my main objective was keeping out of Vietnam, which I managed to do with one trick. Overweight.

Mike: But you didn't actually enroll at Berkeley?

Robert: No. I was a hanger-on. I was a typical 60s hippie, but I didn't do as much drugs as some other people. I did my share, but everyone did back then. But that was before you time, wasn't it.

Mike: Yeah. I wasn't around then. I was born in 1971.

Robert: You weren't even a sparkle then. Oh, young ones... (Conversation trails off into Scottish & Irish History)

Mike: So, there never really was a Berkeley College Grove?

Robert: No. Religious groups are not allowed in Berkeley at all. It's a state institution. So that can't have groups directly connected with the campus. At that time, Berkeley was a hotbed of radical politics and anti-Vietnam, which is where I was at the time.

Mike: Not even Catholic groups could meet?

Robert: Not for religious services. I'm not sure of the rules there. The first service that we held out there, we purposely flaunted this regulation and had it in the Eucalyptus Grove or somewhere along strawberry creek. After that we had all of our services in Strawberry Canyon out beyond the Stadium.

Mike: Did that inhibit your ability to recruit on campus?

Robert: I've never been into proselytization. I don't believe in proselytization for any religion or philosophy.

Mike: So how did members find you?

Robert: They found us. That's always been the way I've conducted things, you let people who look who find. If you're not looking, you won't find. But then we wouldn't want you if you were not looking for something. It really took off when Robert Anton Wilson was out here, he's the author of the Illuminati Trilogy, and we used to meet at his house before we went off to the hills, in order to arrange transportation. At that time I didn't drive and most people didn't have cars.

Mike: So did you notice a different type of people who came looking for Druidism?

Robert: oh. Well, it's hard to say, because Carleton is much more homogenous than anything in Berkeley, Carleton's a much smaller environment. The thing in Carleton was that lots of people were coming out for a good time. Just following their noses a little bit. Most of the people here were searching for something, but I've never been sure with any of them, though there was a definite pagan or anti-Christian bent... at that time, the anti-Christian bent did not bother me, although it does now to a certain extent. I've mellowed over the years. But, the pagan bent never bothered me, although they tended to go too far into the occult, magical aspect of paganism, rather than the cultural aspects, for my taste. But I find, I

believe you'll find, if you continue on... that what will happen is that the type of people that you get in a grove (that you set up outside the College) will have a fairly similar outlook to you. If they don't like your services, they ain't going to come and the result is, (although you'll have all sorts of factions and people you don't like, some people you like and some people you don't give a damn) you'll find that the general milieu is fairly homogenous within the group. And that's the interesting thing about Druidism, that because of the lack of dogma and the lack of standardization, disorganized religion as we always called it, in a sense it's very Mao-istic with "Let a thousand heresies bloom!" And they do! And I think that's good, because it makes people think. And thought is the main part of the search, that and experience and feeling, which is why the search goes on until you finally kick the bucket, then you may find out something.... or you may not.

I always kept the magic to a minimum although I was always very good at calling the winds, and I always got very good results. But theologically, or rather philosophically, I got more conservative than the group, and my bat has always been paleo-paganism rather than neo-paganism. I could make excellent arguments for human sacrifice.... if I wanted to.

(laugh)

In the original group, I probably would have been on the side of the animal sacrifice. Let's sacrifice a cricket, rather than a purely vegetarian passport, ... but whatever works. And it worked, though the building of the altars and the fire was really a nice touch, after they got rid of the portable record stand, which was definitely not a good altar. But the anti-Druids of the old days, Jocks in other words, were drunks (but so were we, so what the hell!) It's a matter of what side you want to be on.

Mike: You mentioned that in Berkeley people came searching for things. I always thought the Carleton group, back in the early 60s, broke down their beliefs into the very basic questions of fate.

Robert: Some of them, probably. For others, no. For some of them, well, Carleton at that time was a fairly Christian place, but not offensively so. Not like Bob Jones. But barriers were falling everywhere in the early 60s. You have to remember that this was the time of the Civil Rights, the time of Vietnam. Of course, the early 60s were before Vietnam, but the Civil Rights were very big. There was a big thing about getting blacks on campus. There was a big thing about getting more sexual freedom, about getting more open houses. At that time, the dorms were strictly segregated by sex, and college kids being what they are, that was a real big issue at that time. It was the start of the general breakdown of society, which has continued to this day. As soon as we wreck the old form of oppression, we'll erect a new form of oppression. That's what's happening now. My bent has always been towards anarchy rather than socialism, or rather towards conservatism. I always believed you should let people go to hell in their own hand basket rather than your own hand basket. And definitely most people will. That's their choice.

Mike: Let's talk about how you met Isaac Bonewits.

Robert: That was in Berkeley, of course. Interestingly, at that time, he was involved in infiltrating the Church of Satan.

Mike: I heard about that.

Robert: And the cult of Tony Levay, as he called him. He used to come out on the Gate Entrance with a nice black wooden throne and would heckle the Christian bible thumpers. That was just off-campus, you see, where all the stuff was happening. Just off of what is called red square. And I was, at

that time, in my hippiedom, to use an Irishism, and I was selling newspapers to skin a living at the Gate, which is one of the better places to sell, if you wanted a congenial atmosphere rather than money. I soon met up with Isaac. Isaac, at that time, was collecting ordinations, he'd join any group in order to be ordained, just to collect them. So, I said what the hell, let's do it real quick and we did it real quick. And at that time, I was in financial trouble, which is no stranger, and we took up rooming together. He had to get out of his place and I had to get out of my place, so we roomed together in an apartment. We got along fairly well for a while. There are a few things between us now, but I've mellowed out quite a bit since then. Monetary again. But that was how I met him. I always thought he went a little overboard on the magic/paganism bit. But that may be part of my essential laziness. I don't believe in enthusing myself over anything, whereas he gets enthused over anything, I control my enthusiasm better than his.

Mike: Okay. When did the actual grove get set up?

Robert: Actually to legally ordain someone, you have to have a grove. So we did that real quick, too. Was Zempel out here at that time?

Mike: Really?

Robert: Zempel was out here for a while.

Mike: Wow!

Robert: And he was studying in physics for graduate work. I don't know whether it was Zempel or another guy. I can't remember, it must have been one of our guys. It was ordain a server quick, ordain a second order quick, to get enough people for a grove, and then, "okay, It's time to ordain some one." But as for getting it going, as an ongoing thing, it was a few years thereafter. And I'm not sure what year it was, but Isaac and I were both members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Isaac more than I. He set up things for them, and I started doing things for them, and it evolved from there. But my recollection of those days are grim. And it kept going for few years. How long...

Mike: I think you were Archdruid until 1977.

Robert: About then.

Mike: And then you went to join Clann na Brocheta?

Robert: Yeah, and that thing broke up fairly quickly. And since then I have only been to one service, and that was Stephan Abbot's (in 1993) 30th anniversary service at Beltane of last year. I always thought that I had run a loose service! And I didn't know what a loose service was. (Laughter.) Of course, Stephan has never been the most focused individual.

Mike: Yes, I've had many conversations with Stephan.

Robert: You poor boy. (Laugh) I've had met him face to face, trying to figure out between what he wants and what he needs, which are two separate things. But, he's a nice boy.

Mike: He's also a Celtic scholar.

Robert: He likes to think he is. He knows his tarot well. He knows a certain amount of Celtic things, but you can't get into Celtic things unless you learn the languages. And as far as I know he's never taken the trouble to learn one. As far as I'm concerned a language is the heart and soul of a culture.

Mike: It is.

Robert: What language you speak orders how your brain will think, as any linguistics person will tell you.

Mike: I get the impression from other people that although you were the Archdruid from 68 all the way up until 77, officially, it seemed that Isaac was doing all the work.

Robert: Work? What work? I don't know what you mean by work?

Mike: Organizing people to do things.

Robert: Oh. I always allowed people to organize themselves. I've always felt that if you as Archdruid try to organize things too much, you will defeat Druidism, which is to let people to discover in themselves. Rather, that you discover, you have let them discover what they think. If you organize things too much, you direct things too much, what you're teaching people is what you think, and that's not my way. I never believe in that. I always believed that the preceptor should do more of the scuttling work. My main responsibility was providing the service, and in making sure everything was there for the service, and trying to collect the money for the waters, which is impossible I've found. Finally I decide, if you want cheap shit, don't contribute, if you want good stuff, contribute. And people contributed a little after that.

Mike: What was your favorite brand?

Robert: At that time I was into Tattie's, but now I'm into Powers. I don't drink that much, but Irish whiskey is always very nice. I've never liked Scotch that much, except for single malts, but that is prohibitively expensive for waters. Besides, you're supposed to water them down for services, except for Beltane and (hmmph!) Second Order Ordinations. Speaking of drinks, Stephan had some of the worst waters I've ever tasted at that May thing. He doesn't do alcohol and some of his alternative drinks are positively atrocious. The mead, which was home-made, and not necessarily bad, was pretty rank. At any rate, we got through it. It was kind of fun seeing some people again. Just like when I resigned from my Archdruidship, and it turned out to be Joan, I believe that when you step down you ought to go away and let them develop their ways, although I've been curious. But I don't want to see what they're doing unless they need help. If anyone asks me for help, or asks me for an opinion, I'm perfectly willing to give it. But, I'm not going to impose upon them. Again, it's not my way. I very much "live and let live," even though I have strong opinions.

Mike: How much of what was written during the Isaac Wars was his part and how much of it was representing the Berkeley Grove?

Robert: As I've said, Isaac has his enthusiasms, which tend to be pro-pagan, anti-Christian. To a certain extent I understood them. In fact, to a certain extent, I shared them, but not to the same radical extent as Isaac, who had unfortunately spent some time in Catholic seminary, which will do it to you any time. Most of the anti-Catholic and anti-Christian people I have known have gone to Catholic schools.

Mike: In the period when you were Archdruid, did you group ever refuse to allow people to join who were Christian?

Robert: No. Not as far as I know. Some people may have tried to discourage them. But they may not have felt welcome, considering the pagan bent of most of the members, which even I was feeling at that time, but as far as I am concerned, everyone was welcome. If what we do doesn't suit you, you don't have to stay. If something we do offends you, go away. If you offend us with the way you act, we'll tell you. I don't recall any problems of that ilk. If so, it wasn't brought to my attention, as it should have been. If they didn't bring it to my attention, I'm rather pissed. I'm a libertarian in that.

Mike: Carleton College had a very, very heavy enthusiasm for Asian religions in the 60s.

Robert: Must have been after my time. Of course Zen Buddhism in the 50s... I got into Zen for awhile, to a lesser extent. There is the Japanese connection at that time, when students went over to Japan to spend some time.

Mike: Primarily in the 60s.

Robert: I wasn't aware of a heavy enthusiasm for eastern religions in my times. However, in the later 60s, everybody was interested in Asian religions. But Eastern religion and Buddhism are always interesting paths to look into and it's different way of approaching things. I know that Dave Frangquist was one who went over to Japan and that, for a while, he was heavily exploring Buddhist thought. Fisher I doubt.

Mike: Fisher was more into Hinduism, I've heard.

Robert: That makes sense. It's a bit more organized. Anyone who's searching religiously, is going to look into Buddhism and look into Hinduism, as being available to people. Definitely, the Druish meditative thing (although it was fairly short and people spent the time looking around at Nature like you're supposed to do) is sort of Buddhistic. I read some Zen when I was in high school, Alan Watts and such, and it interested me at that time. I'd already given up on my native religion, but what can you say about Christian Science? It was, what did Crowley say?, "an excellent grounding for magic, black magic, but magic nonetheless." On the other hand, Christian science, once you get out of the bullshit aspect, has an interesting viewpoint. But they try to control people's mind too much. It's another pseudo-Christian religion heavily by eastern thought. But Christianity is Judaism, itself influenced by eastern religion and pagan European thought. That's another kettle of fish altogether.

Mike: I always wondered if Druidism's Eastern influence kept the Druids from evolving into what Isaac thought was it's natural destiny. Becoming Celtic, like it's framework suggest.

Robert: Possibly. The main problem with getting Druids off the ground, as Isaac was always want to do, was it's predilection for disorganization rather than organization. When you get alot of independent thinking people (or at least they think they are independent thinking) into a group and you start developing their own views that do not coincide. So, to get any type of organization going is very difficult and once you have a grove structure and a totally decentralized hierarchy, organization becomes counter to what Reformed Druidism is. It just doesn't work. If you get organized, if you start a putsch going, you're going to get dogma. You going to get ritualistic formalism. There is a certain amount of fixed ritualism between apostolic successions, but when you try to get a consistent viewpoint, you won't get that with Druidism as it was structured in the beginning. Now if people want to put forth a dogma and list beliefs in that dogma and then build a church based on that dogma that's fine, but that's not Reformed Druidism. They can call it what they want.

Mike: I can tell that Isaac was headed this direction early on.

Robert: Oh yeah.

Mike: With the SDNA.

Robert: I'd like to see the movement grow. I would like to see it grow to a magnitude of force that Isaac wanted, but not as an organization. I'd rather see it as a method of thought and as a method of looking into things rather than as a method of organization and control. That should never happen to

Reformed Druidism. When Smiley tried to organize and put down rules and regulations and traditions....

Mike: You mean Shelton?

Robert: Right. Smiley was another guy. Yeah. He [Shelton] got some nasty reactions from me and most of the others because it wasn't against what he was saying, but for putting it down as a tight little thing. At that time, it was time of do your own thing, and to a large extent, it should continue to be the bat of the druids.

Mike: One of things I've noticed is that the hierarchy of the Druids gives a great deal of autonomy to the individual groves.

Robert: yeah.

Mike: Any damn thing they want as long as they leave the third order alone.

Robert: Right.

Mike: What made Isaac want to bring everyone into his own system, rather than his own grove?

Robert: I think you can call it psychological error. That's a matter between Isaac and his conscience. I hope that he's matured from that viewpoint. I don't know, and I haven't talked to him in many a year. I have a feeling that it was his Catholic seminary upbringing, which gives you a very tight structure and a desire towards a structure. He's a neat freak, I'm a messy freak. I guess you call it anal-retentive in Freudian terms. He always had a tendency to over organize. It's the problem every politician of trying to make people fit in molds. People are very very resistant to fitting in molds. In a mass, you can predict what people will do, but individually it's off the scale. If he ever got the thing going as a big mass, then he probably could get things organized like he wanted to. But then, getting that mass going together as an organization, given the traditional Druid resistance to being plugged into holes, is very difficult. It is probably beyond anyone, but an organizational genius. Who wants a fuehrer? Especially in the late 60's/early 70s? They were everything from Protestant to Unitarians, from every radical movement of that time, and they've become more so since that time. I've always felt that Druidism would be an excellent umbrella organization if you could get it to a reasonably size organization, if you get enough groves going, to incorporate as a non-profit church organization. God knows, it's always been non-profit. To give an umbrella of legitimacy to other odd-ball sects and I think there's a certain amount of need for that in the paleo-pagan, neo-pagan, occult, magickal community, and even for some of the stranger Muslim, Christian and Buddhist sects. There are a lot of very strange sects out there, some of them are dangerous, and some of them are just strange. They have their own little viewpoint. I don't care what someone believes as long as they don't try to put it on someone else and make them believe it. As long as he acts upon his own beliefs in his own group, that's fine. I think there is a need for that time of Umbrella organization and there have been attempts to set up those sorts of umbrella organizations. Most of them failed through the same problem as the Druids; that when you don't have a tight little dogma, people go off on their own little spritzes and pretty soon everything is breaking apart.

Mike: I know there were alot of things during the early 70s which may have made Isaac write in a slightly ruder style. I mean there are three years when nobody wrote to anybody and it looked pretty dead.

Robert: That was the time he was in Minneapolis and he was trying to get things going with the Gnostica newspaper. When you

get involved in the old form of the occult community you run into organizational stasis and I suppose that was very frustrating for him, even though there were new people coming in. The Llywellyn press were very much 1920s operations...You have to remember that Isaac has always had a bent for ceremonial magic and that requires a tremendous amount of organizational control both mentally and physically. You can see where you would carry this bent over into the Druidism and attempt to over organize. As I say, if that's the way you want to set up your grove, fine!, But don't try to make me set up my grove that way.

Mike: Did you like being Archdruid in the early 70s?

Robert: Yeah. It was a nice thing to do occasionally. I missed conducting services since I resigned, and I've always wanted to get together with people near Beltane and Samhain and to hold a service. Actually getting together, since I'm out of contact with many people, is very difficult. Maybe one of these day, it'd be nice.

Mike: Did you always have weekly rituals outside of Quarter Days and Cross Quarter Days?

Robert: No. That's the way we started out. Then I worked out the phases of the moon nearest to Sunday and Noon. I didn't have them on Saturday because I like to watch Football myself, I was a 49ers fan, before they became good. That was the way we continued most of the time.

Mike: I heard that you used to have a lot of pizza conversations at the pizza parlor.

Robert: Some. After Cody & I got together, after each service we'd make a run down to Silano's and have an ice-cream splurge. There's always late night conversations. One winter I tried to organize classes in Gaelic, they lasted a little. I suppose people learned something. At that time I was only middling in my Irish and I could only teach basics. Mainly there were a lot of bullshit session at Bob Wilson's house, before we got going up to the hills. It's at bullshit sessions that you meet people. But organized bullshit sessions, no.

Mike: There weren't any other Druid groups in the Bay Area then?

Robert: There was the Order of Druids. They were a beneficent organization. They still have a few buildings called "Druid's Hall" which are nice to see. But I don't know if they still meet. It's kind of like the Scottish Rite Hall in Oakland, which is mostly a venue for concerts and conventions. I don't think the masons are very active in that hall anymore. I was just printing some directories of cemeteries this week and there are a couple of Druid cemeteries in Sonoma county..... Just Masonic offshoots founded in 19th century.

Mike: But in the Neo-Pagan community?

Robert: No, I don't think so. None that I'm aware. Wait, there were some people basing themselves out of Welsh tradition. I never observed whether they had services.

Mike: So, pretty much the Reformed Druids were sitting out alone in the field?

Robert: Usually it's in a grove. Usually we were sitting around passing the pipe or passing the bottle. I believe in very informal, once you get past the winds. You had the sacrifice. You had the meditation and then the bullshit session for 15 minutes and then break it up. Don't want to have long sermons. I've never been into long sermons. I usually took my readings out of the Chronicles, or occasionally dip into poetry (Yeats, Manningly, Hopkins.) Everyone knew what was coming after I said the first word, but I thought they were important verses for people to think about.

Mike: What does the word "Neo-Pagan" mean to you?

Robert: To me, it's an attempt to reawaken the spiritual sides that we lost when the evangelical Christian movement took over Europe. Unfortunately, most of the Neo-Pagans have taken a lot of New Age philosophy, most of which is clap-trap, and attempted to plug it in, rather than attempting to study what the pagans really thought and felt. Read your Roman philosophers, read your Greek philosophers, read your Celtic & Norse myths and attempt to extrapolate off that and you're better off. I'm more for a paleo-pagan viewpoint. On the other hand, for many people, a good exploration of their roots and developing a belief system on the natural world rather than the revealed world. For me, the revealed world is never true. It is true to the person who reveals it only, it is not true necessarily to anyone else, but maybe true to some. This is especially true when it has gone through the garbling that happens with all the holy books of the world. The bible is a prime example, although the Koran does a fine job of garbling Mohammad's message too. The Buddhist texts are probably not the bad of an example because they were never that organized or even pretended to be organized nearly as much. The Vedas are also garbled mythologies, but good mythology when you get down to it. Man's religious views were originally developed out of his relationship with nature and in order to understand what man is, one must get in contact with that side. The churches, especially the revealed churches, obstruct that path. The Puritan church, in particular, defines Nature as the realm of the Devil. Well that may be true from the viewpoint of primitive man, because Nature is dangerous and not kind or evil or good, it merely is. You've got to understand where you stand in the phytonomy of life forms. One of the problems I have with the radical environmentalists is that they understand where the animals and plants fit in, but they don't understand where man fits into that relationship; just as the heavy timber industry doesn't understand where the animals and plants fit in. You have to consider both. The only way... not the only way, there's no such thing as the only way....one way for me is through the Nature question. Not necessarily an intellectual quest but a soul and vision quest than anything else. SO you can feel where you are and who you are. Find your spot and make it sacred.

Mike: That seems to be the message that the RDNA is trying to use. The cautiousness of ever trying to instruct somebody.

Robert: Right. What is true for you. Even for something as simple as " $2 + 2 = 4$ " is not necessarily true if you are using a base three. (Laugh) If you agree with the Zuni, who don't count 1-2-3-4-5 on their fingers, but who count on the interstices of their fingers 1-2-3-4. You would end up with a base 8 as a result. The truth may be objective, but the perception is very individual. We all only glimpse one facet and if we move we might see more facets. The object of research is to move and see as many facets as possible.

Mike: I like that.

Robert: You never get to glimpse them all. It's just like science. In the 19th century they figured they reached the end of physics, they had all the answers. Then came atomic theory. Every time we think we are getting close to understanding the universe, it throws us a curve and I think the curves are going to keep coming as long as man continues or intelligent life survives, because the little universe we have in our brain case is changing its perception all the time.... I think that each of us desires stasis, unchanging universe, and unchanging within an area of life. So we don't get surprised all the time. So we don't feel threatened all the time. Unfortunately the

world doesn't work that way. IF you don't learn to flow a little bit, yourself, you're going to get run over by the river. Druidism is a way to flow. That's not a good analogy.

Mike: Religion is a difficult thing to pigeonhole.

Robert: They try. Every little sect of an organized religion thinks they have a copyright on the truth, and that's one thing that pissed off Isaac considerably and one thing that attracted him to Druidism. We didn't claim to have a copyright on truth, or to be the only way of approaching it. Unfortunately, once he found his truth he tried to pigeon hole it himself and that's where he and I part our philosophical company.

Mike: Well, that's all the room we have on this tape. Thank you for this interview.

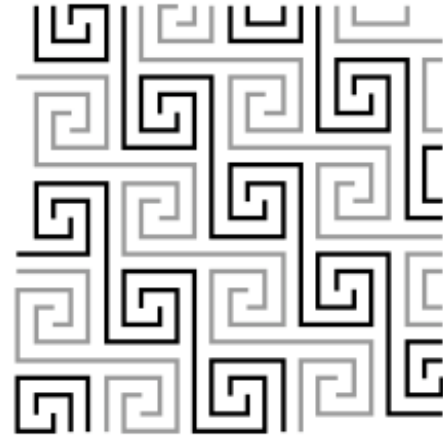


Figure 3 Carruth of Berkeley, Mike Scharding, Norman Nelson, Richard Shelton, David Frangquist & Merri-Beth Weber at the 40th Anniversary at Monument Hill on Beltane 2003.

Interview with Richard Shelton, '71

May 8, 1993



Eric: This is Eric Hilleman. It is Saturday afternoon, May 8, 1993. I am recording an interview in the Carleton College library for the Carleton Oral History Program. I'm talking with Richard M. Shelton, a graduate of Carleton in the class of 1971. Mr. Shelton, who is currently Principal Mathematician for Unisys, was a Carleton math major who subsequently went on to earn a Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Michigan.

Dick: That I have to correct: I was in the Ph.D. program, but I left before finishing my thesis.

Eric: I stand corrected. At Carleton, Dick was heavily involved in a number of things, including folk dancing and the Carleton Druids, more formally known as the Reformed Druids of North America, Carleton Grove. I'm told there was actually a large overlap in his time between those two groups, including both himself and Ellen Conway, who is now Ellen Conway Shelton. Mr. Shelton became Arch-Druid of the Carleton Grove during his time here, and has involved himself with interest in the subsequent ups and downs of the Carleton Druids ever since. That will form the principal subject of what we're going to talk about today. Dick, I wanted to start with some general things about your own background, and what brought you to Carleton, and things like that. Why don't you tell me about that.

Dick: I grew up in Illinois, down-state Illinois, nowhere near Chicago. Of course, Illinois is two states: Chicago and the rest of the state. My father's family is deeply rooted in Illinois, and I was born in Jacksonville, Illinois. My father went to school at Illinois College [in Jacksonville] and subsequently did graduate work in chemistry at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. He worked for a brief time at Dupont in Clinton, Iowa, but discovered that he didn't really like the industrial life, and. I'm reconstructing now, he jumped at the first academic job he found, which was at Western Illinois University in Macomb. That's where I grew up. Macomb is a very odd town, because it's in the middle of

Bible belt rural America, but it is a university town. As a result, I grew up very strange: a faculty brat in a culture that I was very much not a part of.

Almost the only person in Macomb that I still feel comfortable talking to is my high school librarian, who graduated from Grinnell College. She suggested that I look at Grinnell, or more generally at the Associated Colleges of the Midwest. When I discovered Carleton, I applied here for early admission, and was subsequently accepted. I came here because of my roots, I think. [I was] an ardent Republican, but events in Vietnam and on campus changed that fairly soon. I'm now considerably more liberal, and now find myself in America at large sort of isolated and in the milieu of a culture in which I no longer feel I belong. So in a very real sense, nothing has changed!

That's how I came to be here. When I applied for admission, I was interested very much in music and in astronomy. I was convinced I was going to be an astronomy major. But when I came here, I discovered I didn't get along very well with the orchestra conductor, and the astronomy department at that time was sort of a college disgrace. It very quickly became clear that I wasn't going to major in astronomy. So I ended up sort of by default in mathematics.

Eric: Were there particular professors at the time, who favorably impressed you, or pushed you in that direction, or moved you in that direction because they were good, or was it not something that had so much to do with the teachers you encountered?

Dick: Oh, that's difficult to say. I think like many people that age I didn't have a real strong notion of what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I considered majoring in several departments. I had come with a fair amount of mathematics under my belt from high school. My high school was not a regular rural Illinois high school, but the Laboratory School of Western Illinois University. We had the opportunity to take college courses there, so I came here with a fair amount of mathematics. Toward the end of my sophomore year I finally decided that mathematics was clearly what I'd had most of, and seemed to be best at, so I might as well stick with it.

There were a few professors that impressed me very favorably. Roger Kirchner, in particular, I had several classes with. I think any math major has to put in a plug for John Dyer-Bennett, who, for math majors, was a very good instructor, and taught me a great deal about the way mathematics is done, rather than specific mathematical material.

Of all the professors I had here, though, I think the person who left the deepest mark on me was not a math professor at all, but David Porter in Classics, from whom I had beginning Greek and (I think more importantly) the course in mythology, which is where I learned that I have a soul. I don't think it's exaggerating too much to say that it changed my life. I had been interested in mythology before then, but as a very academic sort of thing. It wasn't until I had that course that I began to see the relationship between the dry and dusty mythology that you read about in Bullfinch and people's real emotions and religious needs. I believe it's that course, more than any other at Carleton, or indeed any other time in my life, that made me realize that there is another dimension to the human experience besides the academic one.

Eric: Is that a course that you encountered real early at Carleton?

Dick: Fall term of my sophomore year.

Eric: Since it's relevant, as we get into talking about the Druids, do you want to say something about your religious background? You said that was when you first learned you had a soul; did you *have* a religious background when you came to Carleton?

Dick: My emotional framework is very much a product of my father, who is a typical product of rural Illinois: dyed-in-the-wool Republican, very stiff upper lip. It's almost a cardinal sin to show emotion. I remember vividly one occasion: he had borrowed a tape recorder from the university for some reason, I forget what it was now, but we were having fun just trying it out. At one point he read some Shakespeare into the thing. I thought that was rather interesting; I mean, I had never thought of my father as being interested in literature at all. It turns out in fact that his main extra-curricular activity at Illinois College had been the literary society, but *I* didn't know that, which gives you some indication of how much he kept things bottled up inside. At one point he read out "In Flanders Fields," which commemorates the fallen in World War I, and about midway through he started choking up. After a while, he just gave up trying to finish the poem, and said, "What's the matter with me? I don't understand." There was a big block on the expression of emotion of any sort.

In addition to this, my father, rather atypically for rural Illinois, was a devout atheist. When I was growing up, I remember a couple of occasions, once in nursery school and once in kindergarten, I think once in first grade, some attempt was made to make me familiar with Christianity, but it was clear that it was not something my parents were part of, and it was not something that I was particularly interested in, really. It didn't really touch my life very much. Basically, it involved just being dropped off at Sunday school and picked up. One of the things, I believe, that Druidism is about is that American Sunday schools do very little in actually talking about religion or ethics or morals, or anything of that sort. They're essentially just daycare centers.

It wasn't until I was in, oh, junior high school, I'd say, that I had any significant brush with Christianity. A friend of mine was a Baptist, and he invited me to Sunday school. I went for a few times, and I went to Vacation Bible School class during the summer one year, and became fairly familiar with the Bible. I found it fascinating. I don't think I could ever say that I really believed anything that was in it, as far as the existence of God, much less Christ as the son of God. And to this day, I tend to think that that sort of "religion" is not important to me. It's not what I derive my ethical bearings from. The religious elements in there don't represent things that I regard as historical, although certainly there are a lot of historical things in the Bible. I think my primary interest in the Bible is the historical development of that culture and how the religious elements played off the historical elements.

But I think it's fair to say that by the time I graduated from high school, I had a much sounder grounding in Christian tradition than many people of comparable age in today's society. In fact, I find it very disturbing that many of the ideas and many of the references to religious things or Biblical things one has to explain today; you can't just take for granted that people will know and make the connection. I believe that impoverishes our culture.

But I cannot call myself religious, and it wasn't until Porter's mythology course that I began to understand what religion really is about, and why it is that religion exists as part of human culture. That was the beginning of a very profound change for me. I'm not sure that most people would call me religious now. On the other hand, in a very real sense

I am a *very* religious person, and I think the conjunction of the mythology course and my introduction to Druidism broadened my life dramatically. My spring term sophomore year academically was a disaster, but in a very real sense it was the beginning of my life.

Eric: Let's talk about your introduction to Druidism and your memories of your first encounters with this on campus, or how you got involved.

Dick: Early in sophomore year there was an article in the *'Tonian* about Druids, and it mentioned that there were three on campus. There was a photo showing all three of them holding a service. I didn't really think very much of it at the time. It so happened, however, that one of the three, the Arch-Druid, was a good friend of mine by the name of Steven Savitzky, who was two years ahead of me. Steven was involved with a group of people on Third Burton, which was a hot-bed of campus radicalism at the time. The ring-leader, undoubtedly, was Joe Schuman. (Both Joe and Steve were class of '69.)

Joe Schuman looms large in my view of Carleton, and I think many people's. He was, I believe, in Israel my freshman year, so I didn't meet him until my sophomore year, when he came back as a senior. I was taking Econ 10 my first term, and he was in that class. That was an eye-opener; I was still nominally a Republican at that point, I think, although changing fast. '69 of course was the year that the Vietnam war took serious dramatic turns, especially since everybody expected that after the '68 election Nixon would wind the war down. It not only didn't happen that way, it went very dramatically in the opposite direction. It really galvanized the radical community at Carleton, of which I was not a part. But I became good friends with many people who *were* a part of that.

Steve was one of them, and I had known him in other contexts as well. He was a computer nerd; I didn't really consider myself a computer nerd, but I knew how to use the computer. I don't think I realized at that time how large computers would eventually loom in my life, and they didn't for a long while, not until after I left graduate school, in fact. Of course, at Unisys I live and breathe them. But I was very early attracted to them, and that was another context in which I was familiar with Steve.

One day, in April of '69, we were just sort of walking together, talking about something, at this point I can't remember what; it was probably related to computers, and at one point he just sort of turned and looked at me and said, "*You'd* make a good Arch-Druid." I was blown away! Over the next few weeks he gave me a few things to read about Druidism, and I glommed on to it. At this point in my spiritual development it was *exactly* the input I needed: a large window into several different religious traditions.

After the original purpose of Druidism was accomplished (the abolition of the religious attendance requirement) back in the early '60s, Druidism shifted to become the sort of thing that I found it to be: a spiritual anchor for people who, for some reason or another, needed something to hang on to. In Druidism there are largely two main groups. There are people like me, who are essentially religious *naïfs*, if you will; and then there are the "spiritually battered": people who grew up in very strict hellfire-and-damnation traditions, who simply find that it is more damaging than it is helpful. Steve and I were of the former camp. There was always a large contingent from KARL, the campus radio station at the time, who were also of that camp; technical nerds, with essentially no religious upbringing.

The *Druid Chronicles* I found very interesting. I think more important, however, was the tradition in Druidism of bringing readings and discussion of other religious traditions, particularly Taoism and Zen Buddhism, the two big threads in Druidism at that time. Both of them, I think, go back to David Frangquist, who was one of the founders. Taoism, to me, was the "universal truth," and I still believe it. The formal trappings of Taoism are something I never had much truck with, but the underlying philosophy speaks very deeply to my soul, and it's largely what I understand by the term "Druidic." It was very liberating for me, and it gave me a framework in which to explore my religious or spiritual feelings.

After Druid services were started again that spring at Beltaine, there were something like *seventy-two* people at Beltaine, which shows you what Steve had done with Druidism...

Eric: It shows you what an article in the *Carletonian* can do!

Dick: Well, I think, too, it was because Steve was involved in so many things, and a large number of those people were friends of Steve, and friends of Joe's. A large number of them were folk dancers, which both Steve and Joe were involved with, as was I. Toward the end of the year, [since] Steve was graduating, he appointed me Arch-Druid pro tem, and the next fall I was elected formally as Arch-Druid. I held the office for two years, until I graduated two years later.

Eric: You hadn't been Preceptor nor Server prior to that?

Dick: No.

Eric: Seventy-two people! That's a high point!

Dick: Druidism goes in cycles. It was quite popular when it was founded, probably for all the wrong reasons: it was an easy way to protest the religious requirement. After the religious requirement was abolished, it still stayed in strength for a while, I think largely on the strength of David Frangquist. I've never met him, but the trail I've seen in the Grove Archives and the College Archives and the correspondence I've had with him has been full of a very charismatic personality.

When Frangquist left — I believe he left campus in '66 — Druidism started to fade. Gary Zempel was his successor as Arch-Druid. Zempel himself is an interesting character, a radical who "caught Quakerism" and dropped out of society, all the time remaining a chief engineer for General Electric. He had a great deal of trouble reconciling General Electric with his spiritual beliefs.

His successor, Thomas Carlisle, left campus early I don't know the details. He was the last Druid priest left on campus, despite the fact that there were still a few people interested in Druidism, mostly at KARL. Marta Peck called Frangquist and was consecrated to the priesthood via long distance. She started the grove up again, and turned it over to Steve, and Steve took it and ran, we were on another cycle here. We caught the radicalism of the 60s, and that became the core of the next generation of Druidism.

After I left in '71, the Grove carried on for a couple of years, but starting dying down again in the early 70s, until the Isaac affair, at which [time] a good friend of ours on campus, Don Morrison, started the Grove up again. It went again for a few years, and it dropped back. And then I didn't hear a lot about Druidism for a long time, until in the early 80s, I had a letter from somebody on campus. I can't remember who it was now. I sent a copy of the *Chronicles* and I believe a copy of *The Green Book*, a collection of readings that Frangquist

put together from, oh, all kinds of places: Zen Buddhism, Taoism, a few things from the Old and New Testaments. We stuck in something, "Sayings of the Psychologists," a reading from [Robert] Ornstein's book about how people repeat formulas over and over again, until what becomes important is the formula, rather than the underlying spirit.

And then again we didn't hear anything until the mid-80s. I got a letter from Heiko Koester, and I came down and celebrated Beltaine here with them on May 1. It must have been 1988, because it was the 25th anniversary: we set this thing up and were converting the date into the Reformed Druid Calendar, in which the year is dated from '63, the founding, and it came out 25! We sat there and looked at each other: my God, it's the 25th anniversary! It was impossible to believe!

By this time, the Grove had taken an interesting turn. I don't really know where this impetus came from, although I suspect Isaac had something to do with it. The people who were interested in Druidism were dealing not with the traditional religious cultures, like Zen Buddhism and even Christianity, but with alternative religions, things like paganism and Wicca (I think they pronounce it wik-ka, but the original pronunciation was wit-cha, a good old Anglo-Saxon word.) Heiko was interested in Native American religious tradition, and several of his friends were too. I think the chief focus of their activity was a sweat lodge that they'd set up, I don't know precisely where it was, somewhere around the Farm House.

That was fine with me; I didn't have any trouble with that. The first letter I had from Heiko was a *little* careful, because I think he was — *afraid* is not the right term — *concerned* that us older Druids might not see paganism or Native American spirituality as an acceptable form of Druidism. But, that's just nonsense. Druidism isn't about acceptable forms of religious spirituality; it's about religious needs. I myself find paganism, as it's practiced in modern America, a bit on the silly side in most cases, but Heiko and his friends had put something together that I found quite attractive, actually. The Beltaine service that they held was the first overt Druidism that I had done for years, and it was in a very real sense a homecoming, quite apart from the fact that it was here on campus.

So I wish these people luck. I am certainly willing to help preserve traditions, but it is not my place to set these traditions in concrete, to try to force them on anything, because not forcing things on people, in a religious sense, is what Druidism originally began for. It's the underlying principle that, I think, connects all of this stuff.

Eric: I'd appreciate it if you could talk a little bit about the forms of Druidism as they existed at Carleton when you were getting involved with it; what a typical gathering would have been like, the kind of rituals that were done, or whatever went on. What happens when Druids get together?

Dick: A lot less than meets the imagination of the unwashed! The original services had a very strong Christian flavor to them. They were modeled, I think, unabashedly on Congregational and Episcopalian rituals. A large amount of Celtic mythology was intermixed, to try to make it as outlandish as possible, because an important part of the original formulation of Druidism was to make it so outlandish that if, for some reason, religious credit were granted for these ridiculous services, then Druidism could be unmasked as just another way to get chapel credit, holding the whole religious attendance requirement up to ridicule.

But when they put the service together, they included a few remarkable things, including something that when I read it the very first time — actually, I didn't read it; I heard it at a service the very first time — it hit me right between the eyes:

O Lord, thou art without form

yet we worship thee in these forms;

O Lord, thou art everywhere

yet we worship thee here;

O Lord, thou hast no need of prayers and sacrifices

yet we offer thee these prayers and sacrifices.

Over time — in fact, already that's not the original form; the original form talks about sins: "Overlook these three sins that are due to our human limitations" — already that had been changed to "errors," and since then I think the Lord has dropped out of it. (Druidism at Carleton today sort of sees itself as a Goddess religion, rather than a patriarchal religion; I have no real complaint with that.) I guess the point I'm trying to make here is that in putting this thing together, they actually touched, at least for me and I believe for many other people, or it wouldn't still be around, some very deep religious or spiritual currents.

After that invocation, the Arch-Druid and the Preceptor would draw a Druid symbol on the ground. (The Druid sign is a circle with two [parallel] lines through it.) The Arch-Druid would enter it and consecrate the Waters of Life, which were rumored to be one part scotch to seven parts water, but when I inherited the Paraphernalia, I sat down and actually measured the thing, and it turned out to be one part scotch to *two* parts water, so it was quite a bit stronger than people realized. And on Beltaine, the ratio was reversed. You have to realize that at this time this was one of the few places one could get liquor on campus, or even legally drink it!

Eric: The seventy-two people becomes clearer.

Dick: And then the Waters of Life would be passed in a chalice around the circle. People would partake of them. The chalice was carried from person to person by the Server (whence the name.) After that there was usually a period of silent meditation, and then the Arch-Druid would "do something." Depending on the Arch-Druid, it might be a reading. Fisher (the original founder of Druidism) used the occasion to give a sermon, and since that time has become an Episcopalian priest. He was into this in a big way. A lot of the original trappings were stolen directly from the Episcopalian way of doing things. After the sermon, people would petition the Earth Mother for things, like good weather for the weekend, or something like that.

This was all done in a very light-hearted way. I think that's the other thing that I learned from Druidism, that spirituality is not just serious. If it is only serious, it is missing a large part of the human experience. Certainly the original Druidism was very light-hearted. On one occasion, this is, I think, documented in the Archives now, Howard Cherniack, who is now I believe a lawyer and not religious at all, from everything I've heard of him, was the Preceptor. In the formula of consecrating the Waters of Life, at one point the Arch-Druid is supposed to ask the Preceptor, "Has the Earth Mother given forth of her bounties?" The proper response is, "She has!" One day, he just said, "Yup!" and they had hard a time keeping a straight face during the service for weeks thereafter!

This became known, by the way, as the "Cherniack Response." It's an official part — inasmuch as anything is

official in Druidism — an official part of the liturgy. On occasion you will have a Cherniack Response. And it's very difficult to keep a straight face!

I wasn't very good at giving sermons, so I generally tended not to. I confined myself to readings, for the most part, originally chosen largely from *The Green Book* that Frangquist had put together — it's just a marvelous collection of things — and then from my own readings, particularly from Sufism, which I was interested in to some extent. Again, a large part of the trappings of Sufism I don't find particularly attractive, but the underlying philosophy and much of the poetry is just pure gold. One of the objections that I had to the original *Green Book* is that there was very little there from Islam. I never really understood that, because there are some marvelous things in Islam. But like many of the Judeo-Christian religions, a large part of it is hellfire and brimstone and doesn't really say much, personally, to me.

The weekly services were pretty much as I've just described. Each of the major feast days had its own ceremony. Again, although originally there were set ceremonies, by the time I joined Druidism, the liturgy had become fairly fluid, and a lot was left to the discretion of the presiding priest. The feasts were almost always celebrated in the evening, the evening *before* the official day. Samhain, for example, the beginning of the religious year, is an ancient festival from the Celtic tradition. The official day of Samhain is November 1st, but it actually begins at sundown the previous day. This period was considered a day between years. It was during that day that the forces of the underworld could come out, and that's the origin of Hallowe'en.

"Us Reformed Druids" were pretty tame: no burnt sacrifices, certainly not human sacrifices, although in the Celtic tradition there is very strong evidence for them. (Although, one always has to remember that virtually all of the historical information about the historical Druids came from their enemies; so a lot of the stuff you have to take with a grain of salt.) Our celebrations chiefly involved lighting a fire; the basic service was pretty much the same as the ordinary weekly service, but it had additional parts in it to commemorate the specific day.

Eric: Where did you hold your meetings? Was it on the Hill of Three Oaks?

Dick: We had three locations that were used with some regularity. I'd say the majority of services were held on the Hill of Three Oaks. I always preferred Monument Hill, although in passing I have to mention that at that time Monument Hill was kept quite mowed, and it was much more manicured than it is now. The grove near the monument, the circular grove, was a very wide and open place, and from it you could see a lot of the Upper Arb. To me, that's the heart of Druidism, and in fact, that's where Druidism started. That's where the first services were held.

Occasionally we would hold services on what we knew as Faculty Hill. If you take the drive that goes behind Goodhue, and go down across the creek and up on the other side where there's that Postage Stamp Prairie, there's a road leading off towards the east that goes by an open area that we knew as Faculty Hill. That's where the Classics Department Picnic was usually held. The Arch-Druid, if he happened to be a Classics student, usually presided over that ceremony as well. That's where the first Samhain service was held, and traditionally, in our day, that's where we usually held Samhain services. But typically those were the only services that were held there.

Nowadays there are several other spots that they use, and I know that they don't use Faculty Hill, because when I walked by there with Michael Scharding, he was surprised to discover that any services had ever been held there. And it's not called Faculty Hill anymore; I'm not sure what they call it. It's not really a hill anyway. But those were the three main locations.

Eric: It was you, wasn't it, who actually added something in Greek to one of the books of liturgy?

Dick: Yes. I was asked to do the officiating there [at the Classics Department Picnic], and a friend of mine helped me write a "traditional" Greek sacrifice, traditional in quotes; who knows what actually happened in ancient Greece! We knew that one was supposed to pour libations in the name of various gods, so we did that. And then in addition, I translated the opening part of the Druid service, that I just recited a ways back on the tape, into Greek, and that's there as well.

Eric: You mentioned earlier having received the Paraphernalia. What exactly was all that?

Dick: The most important part of the Paraphernalia were the mimeograph masters for *The Druid Chronicles*, which I believe have since vanished. We did a printing in '71, and I believe that was the last time they were actually used. There was another printing after that, but I haven't seen a copy of that, and I don't know whether [it] came from the same masters or not.

In addition there was a red glass chalice, about four inches in diameter, I'd say. That, I'm pretty sure, was not original. The original chalice, I believe, was green; the tradition is very fuzzy on that. There was a reversible chasuble that was made, I forget by whom, back in Fisher's day for Fisher himself. Fisher had a flair for the dramatic. Everybody else wore sheets, but he wore black! So he stood out, with this chasuble in addition to that. It was primarily green on one side and primarily red on the other. The tradition very early grew up that during the summer half of the year, from May until November 1st, one wore the green side out, and for the [other] half of the year, when actually very little ever happened, except on February 1st, which was one of the feast days, you wore the red side out. (During the winter half of the year, also, the Waters of Life were the Waters of Sleep: they didn't have any scotch in them.) That chasuble was still around in my day, and still around in Don Morrison's day; but I think it's since vanished.

There was originally a staff for the Arch-Druid, but that was lost before my time. A friend of mine gave me a staff, but it turned out not to be particularly useful, because in getting services ready and hauling stuff to wherever the service was to be held, you needed all the hands free you could get. The staff just got in the way, so I tended not to use it. I don't think that's part of the tradition anymore anyway.

Then there were three books. These were all named because of the color of the covers they were in: *The Black Book*, which contained all the liturgy; *The Green Book*, which was the book of readings that Frangquist had put together; and *The Blue Book*, which was all kinds of miscellaneous archives. To this day, when we say "the Carleton Archives," we have to be careful about whether we're referring to the Grove Archives, which was *The Blue Book*, or the Carleton College Archives, which, after a couple of these busts in the boom-or-bust cycle of Druidism, we began to appreciate as the Right Place to keep things!

The sort of things that were in *The Blue Book* were letters from various places, including a note from Lee Mauk, the chapel monitor who informed Fisher (I believe) that the Dean of Men did not look kindly on these chapel slips being submitted by Reformed Druids, and would not count toward the chapel requirement. There were copies of *Tonian* articles, and things of that sort, things of vague historical interest.

That was largely it.

Eric: These things were always passed on from one Arch-Druid to another?

Dick: Yes. In addition to the chalice, there was a clear glass cruet, which is what you used to mix the water and the scotch together. It had a line marked on it: so much water, so much scotch. That's what I was referring to earlier when I said that I sat down and measured what the actual proportions of things was. That, too, I think has vanished.

These things went astray several times. One of the Arch-Druids, three after me, by the name of Steve Corey, didn't appoint an Arch-Druid when he left campus. So he had all of the Paraphernalia in his apartment [in the cities], and when he left the cities, he turned them all over to a friend and said, "Here, take care of these while I'm gone." Well, he never came back, and at one point Don Morrison had enlisted my help trying to run these things down, because I had known Steve. We were looking all over the cities where we could think to find them. I say "we"; I was doing this by long distance, because I was in Ann Arbor at the time. One of my Carleton roommates was my leg man here in the cities, and he was quite amused that we had managed to lose the "Dead Sea Scrolls," as he called them.

But that's about all there was in the Paraphernalia. It wasn't an extensive collection. I think the interesting things were the historical documents. Although many of the originals have, I think, been lost, when I left I Xeroxed most of the stuff of interest there. My successor, Glenn McDavid, also made several copies, and I think left copies of a lot of this stuff in the College Archives, so most of that stuff has not vanished irretrievably. But the non-paper things that were in the [Paraphernalia] I think are all completely vanished now.

Eric: In your day was there a permanent, or semi-permanent altar? In the early Druid days they built an altar and the anti-Druids came and destroyed the altar, and they built it again. Was there one in use?

Dick: First of all, with two exceptions, we never really used an altar in my day, and there wasn't a "built" altar anywhere. One of the two exceptions was the big boulder that's still on the Hill of Three Oaks. Whenever we really needed an altar, that's what we impressed into service.

The other exception was the IBM 1620 in the computer lab, which is where we held the Oimeic service on February 1st. As near as we can tell, historically, Oimeic was a celebration of the birth of lambs, which occurs about this time in England. The Christian church took it over and made it Candlemass. The Christian church has this wonderful way with holidays: if anybody insists on celebrating something, the general attitude is, "Well, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em; we'll just co-opt this thing and make it a holiday, "which is why, by the way, Samhain is not the festival of any particular saint, but the festival of All saints: one saint wasn't enough to make that properly Christian, I guess!

But Oimeic was always held in the computer lab, because it's damn cold on February 1st in Northfield!

Eric: The Druids always have a strong streak of the practical!

Dick: Yes, there's that to be said. The other reason it was held there was because one of the early Druids, the connection with computers goes back almost to the very beginning, was a man by the name of Richard Smiley, who later went on to graduate school in computer science. While he was at Carleton he wrote a program that set up various repetitive loops in the 1620 computer, and you could program this so that you could get the loops to resonate in various frequencies. Because there was a fair amount of electro-magnetic radiation from the computer, you could pick this up on a radio. So you took a transistor radio down there, and you programmed in the notes that you wanted to have the thing play, and you could program it to play any song you liked.

So he wrote this program up for the IBM Systems Journal. It was published as a separate program available to IBM users everywhere in the world, and part of the documentation includes several songs that came pre-programmed in the deck of cards that you'd get with this program. One of the songs was the "Chant to the Earth Mother," and that's what we had the computer play as part of the Oimeic service. For that occasion the 1620 became our altar!

Imagine, if you will, slaving away at a computer program in the dead of night, and having, all of a sudden, the door open, the wind whistling in from the outside, and in march three or four, maybe five or six people dressed in outlandish robes who come around and circle the computer, chanting, "Hallow this altar; hallow this altar," and then set up a radio on the thing and push off a program that plays some weird tune, and then pass a chalice full of milk (this was, you remember, commemorating the birth of the lambs) and hold this off-the-wall ceremony, and then vanish! We saw an awful lot of startled faces.

Eric: About the garb for people: did all the communicants, or whatever the proper term is, appear garbed outlandishly, or was that mostly the people officiating?

Dick: That was primarily the officers. If there were several priests around, this happens on occasion, but not often; there were during my senior year, and there were in the year after the founding, but typically there are only a couple of priests. But if there are a lot of priests around, it's sort of a badge of honor to wear *something* to set you apart. Not to set you apart as a priest, but to draw attention to the fact that we are Druids.

It was fairly common for priests to have some kind of special garment. I went so far as to have a tunic and a chasuble made up for me, but most people contented themselves with a cape or something of that sort.

Eric: Tell me about becoming a priest, your passage through the orders, as it were.

Dick: One becomes a First Order Druid by partaking of the Waters of Life at a service and letting the Arch-Druid know that you want to be a Druid. That's about all it takes: a verbal commitment of interest. Well, that happened to me at the very first Druid service I ever attended. The next week, I was inducted into the Second Order, which involves polishing off any Waters of Life that are left after they're passed. Ordinarily, the remainder is consigned to the Earth Mother, poured out on the altar or onto the ground, to the formula:

This portion of thy bounty we return to thee, O our Mother, even as we must return to thee.

But if you're inducting somebody to the Second Order, you give him the rest of the Waters of Life.

And then the following, no: it was at the new moon. Part of becoming a Third Order priest is performing an over-night vigil, staying awake all night, and I insisted on doing it at the [new] moon, because some obscure passage in *The Druid Chronicles* recommended the new moon as the time to begin New Projects.

I really paid for taking this literally, because it was the worst weather we have had in spring for a very long time! It rained cats and dogs; it was just a disaster. I couldn't keep my fire going. But I resolutely refused to take that as a sign! About half-way through the night, the rain started going away. By dawn the weather had become much more decent.

It was long before this, even before I had become a First Order Druid, that I had what I believe I can legitimately call a "religious experience." It was after Steve and I had been talking about Druidism and religion in general and Zen Buddhism. We had sort of been talked out, I guess, and we just sort of sat there on the Hill of Three Oaks. I sat there looking up, at the Oaks, at the clouds in the sky, and a very odd experience came over me. It's very hard for me to put into words what, really, it felt like. But I had never felt like that ever before in my life: a feeling of being at one-ness with the world, of being part of something that is very much bigger than my own personal life, a sense of connectedness, if you will.

Between bouts of being soaked on my vigil. . . I firmly believe that the whole point of the vigil, as with many other (not necessarily religious) induction ordeals that may involve sacred drugs, or physical hazing of some sort, I really believe that underlying all of these things is an attempt to disconnect the cerebral cortex from rationality: to get it to perceive the world in a different way than it's used to. And it's this dimension that somebody as deeply involved in academics as I was in my first year at Carleton, and somebody who was taught from birth, practically, that one should keep one's emotions bottled up inside — it was this whole dimension that I had really never uncorked before. And it just came spilling out during my sophomore year. This particular instance on the Hill of Three Oaks with Steve, and later at my vigil, just feeling a part of everything in a way that had no rational sense to it — it was a very moving experience, one that I've felt many times since then, usually not in a religious context. Druid services never really touched me very deeply, with a few exceptions. Most often, during a reading that meant a lot to me. Or as I mentioned earlier, the very first time I heard the original incantation, it just spoke voluminously to me, that, yes, this is Right.

But the services themselves — of course, I never really experienced services as an on-looker. I was involved in putting them on from very early on. So a large part of my experience during these things [was] thinking of the stage management. A large part of my religious growth at this time was reading things to find appropriate things to bring to a service to read after the Meditation. I did an extraordinary amount of reading, particularly Zen Buddhism and Taoism, but in other traditions as well.

Eric: Have you had religious experiences beyond the feeling of connectedness? In my readings in *The Druid Chronicles* some people talk about visions that they've had in the Arb or on the Hill. Is that something that has any relevance to you, yourself?

Dick: Robert Graves speaks of a feeling of, or a perceiving of, the Numinous. I wouldn't go so far as to say that I have had visions, but there are definitely times that I've been overwhelmed by something. I believe that it's that kind of experience that underlies things like visions in people that are more visually suggestible than I am, perhaps. Is it God visiting us? I don't really know. The oriental religions have this wonderful phrase: "That is a question not tending to edification." I believe this is one of those questions; that worrying about what this thing actually *is* is not the right response to it. It's a *rational* response to it. The correct response to it is simply to let it happen, and to let the feeling one has when this happens inform and become a part of one's life in other situations as well.

I have never felt that the feeling I have in situations like this forms the rock upon which one can build an ethical system, much less a religious mythology, which is what I believe most of the Christian religion, and many other religions, to be, primarily. There is a core there of an appreciation of the Numinous that gets expressed in mythological terms, and then somewhere along the line, the truth of the mythology somehow becomes the important religious question. When that happens, you're no longer talking spirituality, you're talking something just entirely different, politics, in fact, is all it really boils down to; power politics.

The number of people that I've talked to that feel that they are religious, but feel that their particular church has *nothing* whatsoever to offer them spiritually, I find just astounding. I think it's just part of the natural course of religion, that the way people try to describe their religious feelings, the mythology they use to describe it, the ceremonies they use to try to evoke it, somehow take on their own life and become divorced from the actual underlying spiritual experience that started this whole process in the first place. At some point along the way, frequently one finds priesthoods being set up, priesthoods becoming entrenched political entities, and at this point you're so far away from meeting the spiritual needs of people that I think it's a mistake to call them a religion, if by religion one means something spiritual.

Eric: Is Druidism a religion? To you?

Dick: To me? No. I don't think I would call it a religion. Is *my* Druidism a religion? It is for me. I think that's a large part of what "Official" Druidism is about: helping people to find their own solution to the Spiritual Problem, or their own answers to their spiritual needs. I would not characterize what I feel, or what I believe, as Reformed Druidism; it's my own brand. I believe any true Druid has his or her own brand, which of necessity goes beyond the Basic Tenets as spelled out in *The Druid Chronicles*.

Is it reasonable to categorize it as religion? For example, does it make sense, as we tried to do on one occasion, to get a Druid priest classified as a priest for a IV-D deferment for the draft (which was an important issue back once upon a time)? Well, I think I'll dodge that issue and say that this is one of those questions that does not lead to edification. The proof is not in the definition, but in the living of the life.

Eric: I'd like to ask about reactions from others at Carleton, and since Reformed Druidism is one of those things that people aren't used to, when they encounter it I'm sure you've had quite a range of reactions. I'm curious about, especially at Carleton, how your peers who were not Druids saw the Druids at that time, and what their reactions were. I

mentioned before that in the Early Chronicles, there is talk about the anti-Druids. Did you have experience with anti-Druids during your Arch-Druidship? I'm interested in the reactions of others.

Dick: Carleton in my day was a very tolerant place. When I was there, here, I don't think I ever encountered what I would characterize as anti-Druidism. There was some of this in the early years, although many of the founders thought that it was primarily because these people didn't like them as people, rather than that there was anything religious involved in it. We have always had a great deal of flak from St. Olaf. I think more has been written about Druidism in the St. Olaf newspaper than in the *'Tonian*, and it is all very self-righteously negative.

After I left Carleton, one of the things that pained me greatly was the advent of a large group of fundamentalist Christians on campus. To this day, it is difficult for me to understand how fundamentalist Christians would choose Carleton as a place to come. But there were such people, and several Druids had rather heated discussions and on occasion even violent interchanges with fundamentalist Christians on campus. And that continues to this day, which is something, as I say, I have a great deal of difficulty understanding.

I do not believe that Druidism is fundamentally incompatible *even* with fundamentalist Christianity. Druidism, I believe, says more about the importance of somebody coming oneself to be convinced of the correctness of one's spiritual ideas, [and] the importance and value of examining other religious traditions. In that sense, I suppose, some fundamentalist Christians would object to it. I don't mean to lump all fundamentalism into the Christian camp. There are fundamentalists in other religions as well. But I think, as a historical fact, people who have come to Druidism came to Druidism because traditional Christianity does not meet their spiritual needs, and so as a simple historical fact, people who have been through Druidism by and large tend not to settle down into mainstream Christian traditions. I think a large number from my day have ended up in *some* kind of Christian church, although the boundaries here are a little wavy: a lot of people would not call Unitarianism Christian.

This is worth saying, too: Druidism as I know it is very much a Carleton phenomenon. Druidism transplanted away from Carleton, and there have been many attempts, has never done well. We tried to start a grove in Ann Arbor and failed miserably. This is very ironic, actually: I keep saying that an important part of Druidism for me was to help me get away from the rational straight-jacket that my life was being played out in, and yet Druidism for me is only possible among a community of very intelligent people. This is a paradox that I've never quite understood, and never plumbed to my satisfaction. But the fact remains that I do not enjoy Druidism in the company of people who are credulous, and that's usually what we got when we tried to hold services in Ann Arbor, despite the fact that that is another very enlightened place with lots of intelligent people around. There's something about the liberal arts tradition that made Druidism click, and Druidism away from Carleton just does not work.

What I believe is the biggest threat to Druidism did not come from Christianity at all, but rather from paganism: *l'affaire Isaac*, the whole affair of Isaac. I've never met Isaac, and to this day I cannot be sure what his motives were. We were not particularly charitable in assigning him motives at the time. It seemed to us that what he wanted to do was to

turn Druidism into his own private bailiwick, and set himself up somehow as a Druid pope, a Big Man In Paganism, if you will, latching on to an organization that was older than any of the other pagan organizations that were common at the time that paganism took off.

His original letter [in 1974] proposed that we stop shilly-shallying around about what Druidism really is, and say, "This is what Druidism is," and then put out a paragraph that was the most nonsensical thing that I have ever read in a very long time. It was just anathema to what many of us thought, ah, yes, here it is. This is the paragraph that Isaac proposed:

The Reformed Druids of North America is an Eclectic Reconstructionist Neo-Pagan Priestcraft, based primarily upon Gaulish & Celtic sources, but open to ideas, deities and rituals from many other Neo-Pagan belief systems. We worship the Earth-Mother as the feminine personification of Manifestation, Be'al as the masculine personification of Essence, and numerous Gods and Goddesses as personifications of various aspects of our experience.

Well, that doesn't say anything to *me*. I'm not sure I worship anything; I'm not even sure I know what worship is. But this, at any rate, was not what Druidism was about for me, or for any of the Druids, certainly before my time, and for most of them after my time, until Druidism at Carleton began to take on a paganist flavor. And even when it did take on a paganist flavor, it was a responsible paganism.

Chiefly what we objected to with Isaac's approach is the incredible amount of formalism that he wanted to graft onto Druidism. Rule books, and ceremonies that had to be performed just so, and all kinds of various orders of priesthood, just all the kinds of religious paraphernalia that we were trying to escape from in Reformed Druidism. It was just antithetical to the way we saw spiritual things.

For me this was a very agonized period. The letter came out in '74, and the affair really ended in '76 when he published his huge compendium of paganist writings. When he finally published it, we had made it clear to him that it was fine with us if he published it, but that it was not a Druid publication, it was his publication. We said, "We're not about to stand in your way, we're not even going to say that this is not a Good Thing, because for you it clearly is something that means something greatly to you. But it's a mistake to portray this as Reformed Druidism, because that's not what the Reform is all about." And several people suggested, rather pointedly, that he might want to go off and schis. So he had a schism, and called himself the Schismatic Druids of North America. After the publication of his volume, Schismatic Druidism faded rather quickly.

But during this period, from '74 to '76, there was a lot of correspondence with Isaac and with other more traditional Druids, trying to figure out how we should deal with Isaac. During this period I first faced the question of what, really, do I believe. What *does* religion mean to me? And it was only after I saw myself getting *very* upset, almost homicidally upset, that I began to appreciate the difficulties that can accrue to a religious dispute. I had always wondered before this time what the fuss and uproar was in Northern Ireland: how can two religious, two *Christian* sects get so far from the teachings of Christ that they would kill one another over things? In my own small way I began to appreciate that, and it really drained me.

It also changed my willingness to hold services in Ann Arbor at the time. We were having trouble with the grove

there anyway, because as I mentioned it was not religiously satisfying to hold services there. But after the Isaac affair, I was no longer even willing to *try* to explain to people, "No, that's not what I'm doing; *this* is what I'm doing, and this is why I'm doing this." My Druidism became a very much more private affair from that point on.

I'm still very happy that there is something like Druidism going on. I'm still willing to come out of retirement to help when things get sticky. And I don't object to leading a service in the company of right-minded people, doesn't that sound awful? But I am not an evangelist. For a while I would have characterized myself as an evangelist, I think. But I no longer am.

In fact, I've come to believe that in its own quiet way, Druidism is about non-evangelism; that it is one of the cardinal errors of mankind to propagate what one believes by any means other than by *example*. If one feels strongly enough about something, the right way to make people understand that is to live it, not to preach it. It wasn't until Isaac that I really understood that.

Eric: Did you meet him?

Dick: No. I came *this* close. He was in the cities for a while during '75-'76, I think, and actually came down and participated in some services here at Carleton. At the reunion in the summer of '76, several of us old-style Druids came, and I had written to Isaac, saying, "I would like very much to meet you; I think you should meet us." Arguments on paper have a way of living their own kind of life and cut more deeply than they are meant to. I felt that it was important for us to meet face to face. But he made excuses and left for the west coast before then. So I never did have a chance to. I understand now he's severely disabled, from some disease or another, which is not anything I would wish on my worst enemy, even Isaac. I haven't heard from him in, literally, decades.

Eric: I wanted to ask also something about the organizational phenomenon of the RDNA. As part of becoming Arch-Druid at Carleton you became *ex officio* Chair of the Council of Dalon ap Landu. I wonder if you wanted to say some things about that, and the phenomenon of people, after having graduated from Carleton, going out, still being part of the organizational structure; and maybe something about the strengths or weaknesses of the Council.

Dick: Originally Druidism was *simply* a Carleton phenomenon. Several of the early Druids, however, when they left Carleton didn't want to drop Druidism, and started groves in other places. Very shortly it became evident that there needed to be some broader organization than just the campus organization. The priests of the time, there must have been three or four maybe, decided (out of the air really) to say that the supreme authority, such as there is any in Druidism, is the Council of Third Order Priests. The Third Order is the Order of Dalon ap Landu, so this is the Council of Dalon ap Landu.

There are several higher orders, but they function more or less like honorary degrees. There's no real activity in the higher orders. Originally, I think, they were simply part of the initial cult of outrageousness. They've not proved useful and have largely died out. It's the first three orders that are important.

The basic structure of a grove is to have a priest to lead the service, and a Second Order Druid to assist, and a First Order Druid to serve as the Server. These three people are our minyan. You have to have three to start a local organization. If you don't have at least three, there's no real point in having a formal organization.

Fairly soon after the original founding, Robert Larson, who was a Carleton student, left for Berkeley and founded a grove at Berkeley. I have no idea whether this is still going on, but for a very long time it was the only other grove that survived with any permanence at all. There were several early groves. One Fisher founded in New York City, that was doomed to extinction. Frangquist founded one at the summer camp that he worked at during the summer. Of course it died when he left. Norman Nelson founded one at his graduate school in Vermillion, South Dakota, and one at his home city of Rapid City in South Dakota. And they all died. There was one founded by Savitzky at Stanford that went along for a while, but again, I have no idea if this is still a going concern. And we founded one in Ann Arbor that lasted for a couple of years and died when we left. Died before we left, really; we stopped holding services long before we left.

But officially, anything that embraces the Reform as a whole, the organ for deciding things like that is the Council of Third Order Priests. In '76 there were something like 30 of us, maybe a bit more than 30. I have no idea how many there are now.

Fairly shortly after this mechanism was put into place, a series of resolutions were passed: formalizing the normal local grove structure; stating explicitly that there is no official liturgy, with the single exception of the induction into the Third Order. There were some other things as well. Practically from the beginning these were all passed by mail, because never once since the first couple years of Druidism have all the priests been together in one place, or even a quorum of them. All of this business was done by mail.

The last thing that passed was in '71: I insisted that we formalize the equality of men and women. There was a lot of male-chauvinist-pigism in the early years of the Reform, and it's not entirely due to the fact that women had less freedom at Carleton at that time (due to the women's hours.) It is directly traceable to the Christian tradition of Fisher and some of his friends. Chief players against that were Frangquist and his wife, and myself. We pushed hard to get this thing; even went to the extent of looking up Druids that we had hadn't heard from in a long time to try to get their votes on this thing.

And in the end it passed by consensus. There were no votes dissenting from the part that was officially adopted. We cultivated that as an ideal. Nowhere will you find it written what a quorum is in the Council of Dalon ap Landu. As an historical fact, everything that was adopted by the Council was adopted by consensus.

When Isaac came along and started consecrating all of his pagan friends to the Third Order, we rapidly saw that if he really wanted to take this and run with it, it would be possible for him to swamp the Council with pagans, and then he could do whatever he pleased. And so very, very strongly we pushed the notion that *anything* the Council adopts has got to be by consensus, because we knew that when it comes to Neo-Pagan sorts of things, things could not be adopted by consensus. There was no consensus on that sort of thing. But since '71, nothing has happened.

Eric: Do you consider that the Council still exists, in any sense?

Dick: Oh, sure. Sure it exists, just by the fact that there are people in the Third Order. It's never done business for a long number of years, and, I'm convinced, never will. I used to have this recurring notion that we had to be careful with this, because it is exactly this kind of organization that pulls a religion away from the spiritual into the formal and political. If one wants

Druidism to survive as an organization, which on the face of it is nonsense; Druidism isn't about organizations, but if one wants Druidism to stick around, you have to have some formalism.

Perhaps the best way of perpetuating this formalism is as, in fact, has happened: by word of mouth, from one retired priest to a struggling undergraduate here at Carleton, trying to understand all this stuff, what the founders had in mind when they wrote this kind of thing. I feel strongly enough about Druidism that I'm willing to go out of my way to be part of that. But I think setting up a formal structure to try to keep this thing going is a mistake; it's the trap that religion falls into.

I didn't always believe that. In fact, when I first started as Arch-Druid, I set about codifying all the tradition I could find. It was in the summer after I was appointed Arch-Druid pro tem; I put together a "Codex of Form" (as I called it) that had all of the tradition that I could glean from *The Blue Book* and everything I could put together about what old-style Druidism was about. It was full of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" and so forth. It was such an anti-Druidic sort of thing; I have done penance for this many, many times over! But I was put right in no uncertain terms by several people. It was the beginning of a long correspondence with many people whom I've never met but value as friends. And this, too, is a part of my religious education, in understanding just exactly what true religion is all about.

And it was exactly this sort of thing that we objected to in Isaac: just form run rampant. Yet "Thou art without form."

Eric: If your goal is to continue as an organization, he had at least the point that the Council was not a very effective method of having an organization.

Dick: By design, I would say.

Eric: One of the points he would bring up would be the unreliability, from time to time, of the Carleton Grove Arch-Druid taking their responsibility seriously in reporting to Druids at large happenings and changes.

Dick: And I can understand that kind of frustration, even if he weren't into a power play trying to be Big Fish himself. There was a real divide in Druidism at this time, between Carleton Druids and non-Carleton Druids. The non-Carleton Druids, I'm sure justifiably, felt themselves on the outside, and I'm not saying we're entirely innocent of fostering that. But it remains true that the Druids I'm comfortable with, that I commune with, that I can understand, are the Carleton Druids. I'm firmly convinced that the Reformed Druidism that I know is a Carleton phenomenon, and so it's not particularly important to me that there be an organization for the rest of Druidism.

At the same time, I don't want to give the idea that I don't think people outside Carleton aren't important, or that spiritual development outside Carleton isn't important. But I am convinced that the kind of organization that Druidism adopted survives well only at Carleton. Spiritual enlightenment for other people is important, but probably ought not to be done that way.

Eric: I was reading yesterday, preparing for this, through a lot of the correspondence that I have, a great deal of which comes out the '74-'76 Isaac wars. This correspondence pretty much stops as soon as Isaac's *Druid Chronicles (Evolved)* is published. At that time there had been talk about a Provisional Council of Arch-Druids to do some of the, well, people had different ideas as to just what it would do. There

were indications that you would not necessarily be opposed to being part of it if it was going to exist. Did anything ever come of that, or did that just fritter away, or what? What's the end of that story?

Dick: I don't really know the end, to tell you the truth. The Provisional Council of Arch-Druids was suggested by Robert Larson of Berkeley as a way of trying to keep the official face of Druidism somewhat more consistent than the Arch-Druid of Carleton was capable of doing. You have to realize that most Arch-Druids of Carleton had very little in the way of resources, and little time, to spend on this kind of thing. The argument is just, that if Druidism was going to be a nation-wide phenomenon, there needed to be something beyond the Arch-Druid of Carleton to give it some kind of permanence.

At the time [though], most of us from Carleton deeply mistrusted Isaac's motives. We were not at all clear just what the Provisional Council was designed to accomplish. What made us even more suspicious was the fact that this thing was organized, as we saw it, behind our backs, because no Carleton Druids were involved except Robert himself. But again, that's not necessarily attributable to them; they didn't know of the Ann Arbor grove. Although we had announced it to the Arch-Druid of Carleton, she had left campus and not issued anything like a formal report, as she is required to do by the Council.

A large part of the animosity at that time is attributable certainly to deep differences in spiritual matters, but also to a bad lack of communication. It's exactly that sort of thing that the Provisional Council was to try to correct. But the Provisional Council really didn't meet the needs of anybody, so it died fairly soon. It didn't meet Isaac's needs, because Isaac wanted to be leader himself, and this was yet another obstacle in his way. It didn't meet our needs, because Arch-Druids and groves in general, beyond Carleton, have not been particularly important to Carleton Druids.

If Druidism was to be a national organization, the need for something like that was clear, but it's never been clear that Druidism *needs* to be a national organization. Some of us at the time thought, wouldn't it be just *terrible* if Druidism became a religion in this sense! One of my recurring nightmares would be to wake up and discover that Druidism had been declared the state religion! Something to rob Druidism of its essential nature; and that would do it very rapidly. So the Council didn't really answer anybody's needs, and it didn't survive very long.

Eric: I wanted to back up just briefly to a minor point. You [spoke] about the higher orders as being the equivalent to honorary degrees: did you get such an honorary degree?

Dick: Yes . . .

Eric: What orders were you?

Dick: I am a Druid of the Fifth Order, which is the order headed by Norman Nelson, whom I regard as probably the quintessential Druid. He was one of the original founders. The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Orders were all created in a single day, by who were then the three priests of the time: Fisher, Frangquist, and Nelson. They each became Patriarch of one the higher orders. I've had a lot of correspondence with Norman, and at one point he sent me a letter that said, "Find somebody to consecrate you to the Fifth Order!" So I did. It was in fact Steve [Savitzky], and I asked Norman's permission to have Steve consecrated to the Fifth Order, and he granted it, so I consecrated Steve to the Fifth Order.

Eric: As I understand it, you never were consecrated to the Fourth Order?

Dick: No, that's right. Beyond the Third Order it's just catch as catch can. I'm honored that Norman thought enough of me to grant me this honor. It's not an honor I wear on my sleeve. It's not the sort of thing that I will admit to unless I'm asked it point blank, because I do not believe that it is fundamentally an essential part of my religious experience, or fundamentally a part of Druidism.

Eric: Continuing with the trivial historical footnote, then: as far as I could tell from my readings, it wasn't clear that anybody had ever gone beyond the Seventh Order, which was the Order that Gary Zempel was made Patriarch of.

Dick: Right. Gary Zempel was the Arch-Druid after Frangquist. The first three Arch-Druids were Fisher, Nelson, and Frangquist, and they became Patriarchs of their high orders in that single day back in '64. As sort of a matter of course, the Sixth Order elected Zempel, the next Arch-Druid, to be the next Patriarch. But Zempel never selected any other priests to his order, and not too long after he left Carleton, he sort of dropped out. At one point, he felt that he should do something about the fact that the line of higher orders had stopped there, and mentioned to me that he wanted to be considered as retired, and somebody else should be appointed as Seventh Order [Patriarch]. So I wrote to Frangquist, the Patriarch of the next order down, which is responsible for electing the Seventh Order Patriarch, and said, "Well, Gary doesn't think that he's Patriarch anymore, or doesn't want to be considered Patriarch anymore. This is your bailiwick; if you want to do anything about it, fine." And nothing happened. I didn't expect anything to happen. As far as I'm concerned, he's still Seventh Order Patriarch, and there are no other Seventh Order priests, and it's ending there. It's not a big deal for me. It was for Isaac.

Eric: There have from time to time been other orders created, besides the numerical things, some of them not within the RDNA structure, but others "possibly" within. The Archives includes something from a person who was a Carleton Arch-Druid, at least during the summer of 1978. (It's not too clear what the chronology is in some of those years!) She's announcing the creation of a new order, and she considers herself RDNA. Do you have any comments on that kind of thing, or are these higher orders or not? Where is that for you?

Dick: I've never understood this penchant for creating orders. It's largely a Neo-Pagan phenomenon, the orders created beyond the first [set of] higher orders. The first higher orders, I think, were created simply because Frangquist and Nelson wanted a bigger piece of the action. The higher orders have never been important to me as part of my religious experience. Do I recognize these as orders of Reformed Druidism? Well, I think probably Orders Four through Ten I will acknowledge as part of Reformed Druidism because they're in the *Chronicles*. Are they an important part of Reformed Druidism? Not at all. Are the other high orders important to Reformed Druidism? Well, they're not to my Reformed Druidism. To their members they may be important; far be it from me to gainsay that. I'm perfectly willing to live and let live. Am I going to refuse to have anything to do with somebody that comes to a service wearing the insignia of such an order? No, not at all. I don't feel the need to wear my insignia; it doesn't bother me one way or the other if they want to. It's just not part of my view of Druidism. I know they're there; certainly to me they're not important.

Eric: OK, I want to do a radical shift of where we've been, and return you to college and talk a little bit about some of the other things that were going on at Carleton while you were there, possibly as they relate to you as Arch-Druid, and possibly not. For instance, in May of 1970 the college has its Strike for several days following the invasion of Cambodia. As when I'm doing an interview with *anybody* who was here at that time, I'm interested in knowing your perspective on that and how it affected you, what part you may have played. This is turning into a long question, but I noticed, I guess it must have been in the Black Book, you had a poem or a chant "In Time of War," with the notation that it was written following the invasion of Cambodia. Obviously international politics was on your mind at the time.

Dick: The Exorcism.

Eric: An Exorcism, that's right. There; it's a long question; run with it!

Dick: In the mid sixties several things happened at Carleton. In the earlier sixties, about the time that Druidism was founded, various requirements were being abolished, like the religious attendance requirement. In my freshman year convocation requirement, the requirement that you attend the convocations, was abrogated. In the early sixties a lot of these *in loco parentis* things were falling, and there was a great deal of animosity between the student body and particularly the Dean of Men's Office, to some extent to President Nason as well, because, and, I feel, rightly, the students resented these things as not being an appropriate part of an adult educational experience.

I was not really part of that. A large part of this bitterness was over and done with by the time I got here in '67. In '67 the burning issue was race relations. The yearbook for that year ['67'68] was virtually taken over by essays about the relationship between races. Oddly enough, that seems to have been restricted pretty much to that one year, I think largely because while I was at Carleton we never did have much in the way of a minority student population. I think that's changed somewhat now, but we had a few token blacks, and that was it.

But increasingly as the years went on, certainly by the time I was a sophomore, when Joe came back from Israel, the burning issue, bar none, was Vietnam. It consumed every aspect of our lives, from watching the body counts on TV to the Damoclean sword of the draft hanging over every male one of us. The death of somebody whose name I've forgotten, and whom I never knew, who was the only Carleton grad I know of that was killed in Vietnam, these were all impinging on us all the time.

The election of 1968 really galvanized the campus, and large numbers of students went on buses to Wisconsin to help in the primaries for Gene McCarthy. Many of my close friends, in fact, went on that. I did not, because, I think, at that time I was still a Republican. I had come to campus in '67 supporting the war. It did not take long to change my mind. (This was quite apart from worrying about the draft, although my mother certainly did! It hadn't yet really crossed my mind that *I* myself could possibly be drafted. This changed later on!)

When it became evident that Nixon was not going to wind down the war in Vietnam, there was a dramatic change of attitude on campus, I believe, and people became radicalized in a way that heretofore had not been.

My junior year was the year of the Strike. I was involved as a member of the CSA government: I was a CSA senator

for a while, and then I was secretary of CSA, because I got so fed up with the incredibly poor performance of the previous secretary. One of my duties as secretary was to issue minutes for the meetings. This involved typing them up on mimeograph masters and then taking them upstairs to Fourth Willis. (Willis at that time was the Union.) Fourth Willis was where the government offices were and where the mimeograph machine was.

In the process of doing that, I came to know another person who was up there frequently. She had an office up there, but also she used the mimeograph machine. She had been a graduate student at the University of Michigan. Even before the Strike we had had conversations about what had happened at the University of Michigan. I don't know if you're aware of this history, but Michigan, outside of Berkeley and Columbia, was probably the most radicalized campus, and it was that campus that was overrun by the sheriff's office. Really brutal police tactics were used against students there. In fact, a couple of years later I myself went to Michigan as a graduate student, and I remember thinking once, walking past a building on campus, realizing, something suddenly clicked, *that's* the building where all this happened! It was like a thunderbolt from a distant time.

But this woman I talked to quite a bit, and she was a large part of my radicalization. During the Strike we were up on Fourth Willis every day, churning this mimeograph machine, trying to gather and put out all the rumors from all across the country that we knew about. After Kent State and the calling out of the National Guard, there was a very real sense that the powers that be in this country were starting to turn, maybe "Nazistic" is a little too strong a term, but repressive and Fascist. The March on Washington happened, I forget precisely when it was, but I'm sure it was that spring, and Joe was part of that. (I didn't go on that, having essentially no resources and no way of getting there, and refusing to hitch-hike.)

But basically the whole educational structure of the campus came to a halt. There may have been some classes, but virtually everybody stopped going to most of the classes. I can still remember standing by the teletype (KARL had a teletype; that was on Third Willis, I think) and watching as these things came through, and literally ripping them off the teletype and taking them upstairs and typing them onto mimeograph masters. There was a very strong feeling that you couldn't trust the national press. You couldn't trust anybody over 30; that was the phrase, right?

It was a very paranoid time. The threat of the draft really burned that into us: if we got out of line, *we would be drafted*. Our draft boards would be told, and our deferments would be canceled, and we would be called up. I don't really believe that happened a lot. I know it did happen on a couple of occasions. But that was one of the threats that was held over us.

I can still remember the first draft lottery. I think it was when I was a sophomore; it must have been the spring of '69. The numbers came off the teletype, and they were ripping them off the teletype and posting them on the glass window in the KARL studio. I remember coming into the room — it was packed — and starting at the beginning, looking for February 28. I was aware by the time I had gotten to the second of these sheets (there must have been maybe ten of them all together) that my heart was beating so hard I was sure everybody could hear it. As I got farther and farther along down the sheets and I still hadn't found February 28, I started to relax, until I got all the way to the end of the sheets

and I *still* hadn't found February 28, and I realized I'd missed it and it might very well be the second date for all I knew!

It turned out it was number 299, which, even I knew at that time, meant effectively that I wouldn't be called for the draft. And there was a real moral crossroads for me: once the threat of the draft had been removed, was I really as radical as I said I was? This was something I had to think long and hard about. I knew that I was against the war in Vietnam. Would I actually march in demonstrations against it? Well, I didn't, until the invasion of Cambodia, and at that point I was finally pushed over the line; I realized this was something you had to stand up and be counted about, and it was then that I wrote the Exorcism. We held that Exorcism complete with blazing torches that we smothered to put the flames of war out.

Earth Day also happened about the same time. I forget just what year that started.

Eric: Same year.

Dick: Druids were part of the first Earth Day. We gave an invocation. The summer that Ellen and I graduated, we were married that August. The wedding present that I remember best, and that we still have, was *The Last Whole Earth Catalog* that was sent us by Steve.

Eric: How appropriate!

Dick: But it was all part of the times. The radicalism of those couple of years is just impossible to forget, and it really shaped an entire generation. It's been said so many times that it sounds almost trite now. But those were the formative experiences of my generation.

Eric: Do you want to say anything to wrap up, you've touched on this many times, of course, summing up the meaning of the Carleton Druids in your life. That sounds much too vast! Anything that would be an appropriate way to close, stepping back and putting it in its place for you.

Dick: Well, for me personally Druidism was another one of those formative events, experiences, not really an event. Druidism determined the way that I look at life, the way that I deal with not just my spirituality but with almost every aspect of my life, the way I approach writing a computer program, even. A very strong belief that (thinking of it in terms of a computer program now) the user must be respected. As the designer of a program, you can't foist your way of looking at things on the user; you have to adapt your program to what the user wants to do, what is valuable for him. And that's just another bit of Druidism, really. The whole idea of making life user-friendly, if you will.

In a very real sense I live and think and breathe Druidism every day, every hour of my life. As a formal religion I scarcely ever think about it any more, except when I get calls of distress from Carleton! I am occasionally asked to speak about it by other enlightened groups, like the Unitarians. It is not important, no, that's not true: I was going to say it's not important to me that Druidism continue as a "religion." I am very pleased that it has, and not because it validates in any sense something that I was a part of or something that I helped to continue, but because I believe very strongly in its principles and its approach to life.

As religious fundamentalism rises in this country, and in the world, I feel very strongly that it's important that we stand up for an alternative view; that we make clear that no matter how firmly someone may feel that fundamentalist Christianity is the only way to salvation, it is important in a pluralistic society (I would say important anywhere in the

world, but certainly in America) not to let that destroy the fabric of society, no matter how sinful you may view that society. In the long run, that is the road to, I won't say damnation, but certainly to destruction. It's important to me that this contrarian view be promoted.

It's not important to me that that view take on a particularly Celtic view or form, or a Reformed Druidistic form, although I would say that this entire contrarian view is a druidic, small outlook. So the particular forms that it takes are not really important to me, but the principle itself I think is one that is one of the most basic in our society.

It's not an anti-Christian view; it's an anti-totalitarian view. I have nothing against the beliefs of Christianity; there are many beliefs of Christianity that I believe in. The moral teachings of Christianity I feel quite in tune with. But the *modus operandi* of fundamentalist Christian sects is to me just another version of totalitarianism, and it needs to be called that, and it needs to be countered.

Then again, one can apply the same principles in other situations that are not spiritual at all. The traditional top-down management that I encounter every day of my life at Unisys is totalitarianism, and it is counter-productive, and it's why the Japanese are beating us. And this is another way in which I am Druidic, trying to sabotage this top-down management.

Western civilization has from the very earliest times been pushed by and propagated by control freaks. At root, that is what I think Druidism is: a statement against control; that the best things in life come by letting them happen, not by controlling them to make them not happen. All valuable change, well, this is awfully dogmatic, but all valuable change (yes! I firmly believe this!) has come about in situations where the status quo simply can no longer hold, and the people who are trying to keep it from changing are willing to stoop to totalitarian tactics. It is at junctures like these where the Druidic approach is *necessary*.

Eric: Thank you.

Notes added by Dick during the editing of the transcript:

1. *Although at the time of the interview I had not met either the Frangquists or Isaac, I have since met both: the Frangquists in October 1993 and Isaac in April 1994.*

2. My numbering of the floors of Willis may leave some puzzled. The government offices were on what is generally known as Third Willis, the fourth floor if you count the Ground Willis as the first floor. My account is probably influenced by the memory of the three long flights of stairs from the ground floor where I got my supplies to the top floor where I ran off the minutes.



Figure 4 Shelton at 30th Anniversary,

April 1993 on Monument Hill.
First Interview with
Isaac Bonewits

by Michael Scharding
on April 1, 1994
Carleton College Archives
Oral History Project
Transcription by Benjamin Wood
Lightly edited for clarity, unknown/questionable words are put
inside brackets

IB= Isaac Bonewits
MS= Michael Scharding



Note: See many other interviews with Isaac Bonewits in Green Book 10 of Part Six of ARDA 2.

MS: OK, this is Michael Scharding interviewing Isaac Bonewits, oh, you mind if this is recorded?

IB: No, that's no problem.

MS: OK, on the first of April, April Fool's Day.

IB: Ah hah

MS: 1994

IB: An auspicious to announce the founding of the Order of Thoth.

MS: That's right. Well, this one is mostly going to be back on the RDNA days again. As we were just talking about the writing of the family tree of Druidism, one of the rules in the bi-laws is only an Arch-Druid can elect a third order priest. Was this a common practice, or did any third order person do this?

IB: As I recall, <pause> As I recall you had to be a third order priest to be an Arch-Druid, and you could then ordain other third orders, but I also recall though that the point may have gotten stretched a few times that any third order can ordain another third order. I believe that all of the times that I did ordinations, I was the Arch-Druid of a given grove. Although, oddly enough, I might have been a traveling Arch-Druid, I believe I did several of those ordinations for what

eventually became the Arch-grove of the Hasidic Druids of North America down in St. Louis. I was traveling down in St. Louis, at the time I was the Arch-Druid of the Twin Cities grove, in Minneapolis, and I may have at that point done some of the ordinations down in the St. Louis area. That would have been Lou Schreiber and Vicki and Carolyn Clark.

MS: One of the things that some people have brought up, and there's so much dirt that gets thrown on you...

IB: <laughing>

MS: There is, a seemingly great desire on your part to become Arch-Druid of something, and I've noticed that you've been Arch-Druid of a grove often when there's another grove in the same city, mainly because of your SDNA branch. I was just wondering if this might have been because you wanted to increase the size of the third order, that you felt that you needed to be an active Arch-Druid.

IB: <pause> I don't think so. I'm trying to remember what time period you'd be talking about here.

MS: I know you were Arch-Druid of Stockton Grove from '72 to '74, Twin Cities roughly from '74 to '76 it seemed, and then you came back to Berkeley and then you were either Arch-Druid of Berkeley or the Mother Grove in Berkeley.

IB: <pause> I can't remember a lot of those details. I was staying with Bob Pinell <pause> and Roy Keister I think it was in Stockton. I may have made them second or third order, I don't remember. And we did have a grove there that, while I was living in Stockton. Generally, I tended for a long time to simply have a grove where I was living, because if people didn't already about Reform Druidism, I would tell them pretty soon, and then people would say "Oh great, let's start a grove." So we would. But I think it was more on the fact of people wanting there to be a grove then for me being particularly enamored of the role. Most of the time when I was starting a grove, I was the only one who was experienced with the liturgy and such. About the only time there was ever an election that was really contested with multiple candidates, was when I was in the Bay Area where there were a lot of third order Druids floating around. But Stockton was quite a distance from the Bay Area.

MS: And I also noticed that it almost looked like the grove was an extension of the SCA.

IB: Well we had an overlap for a while, a definite overlap. Bob Larson's Clann na Brocheta Grove was, in one sense, an extension of the Renaissance Pleasure Fair, because Clann na Brocheta was a group of Gaelic players and musicians who worked at the Renaissance Fair. And he did there ceremonies for them in [Munster] Irish, um but it, there has been an extensive overlap between the SCA and pagendom and science fiction fandom and computer fandom for many, many years. Because all of these are subcultures that encourage people who are intelligent and creative, so they are going to have overlapping populations.

MS: OK, yeah because I've noticed that a lot of Arch-Druids, a lot of groves have been [SCA] members and come to Carleton.

IB: Oh yeah, and a lot of them have been computer techies.

MS: Yes, <pause> one of the things that is very curious is <pause> more so than a few others, I think we can admit that you are a little more, it almost looks like you're proselytizing.

IB: <gasp>

MS: Yes

IB: You're saying dirty words

- MS: Big dirty word, oh, most of the other groves that I've noticed that were setup by founders, except for the one in Berkeley which, of course, led to you, very very few people get ordained by the Carleton graduate. In fact, most of them never ever escape the college environment.
- IB: Right.
- MS: Berkeley somehow, probably because of the, the rather convenient Bay Area neo-Pagan scene, managed to dump the college environment and go for something permanent. And, I'm kind of curious...
- IB: Well there wasn't much of a neo-Pagan scene in the Bay Area in 1969, there were twenty or thirty people in the area who were Wiccan, although most of them were being very definitely undercover in that process, because even then it wasn't safe to come out in public. But there were a number of people in the SCA who were Pagan. And I discovered the SCA at roughly the same time I discovered Reform Druidism, so they seemed to make a good match. And we started doing Druid ceremonies at some of the weekend tournaments. To deal specifically with the topic of proselytizing, I never thought there was anything wrong with telling people you had something good. Shoving it down their throats, or threatening them with hell-fire is totally different, but sharing something that you have that you think is a wonderful thing is, if not an obligation, at least an understand urge on the part of people that who've discovered something good.
- MS: Yeah, one of the requirements in the third order is to minister to the people's needs, but I think that the Carleton group had the understanding that they're supposed to find you, or maybe that's just laziness on their part.
- IB: There's a couple, several different orientations from that. I really believe that Dave Fisher was coming out of one of the United Ancient Order of Druid groups, that from the style of his liturgy and his description of what he thought Druidism was, it seems very clear that he was coming out of that group. And that group is a fraternal order patterned after the Masons, and like the Masons, pretty much insisted that people knock on the door and ask for admission. They did not actively go out and recruit, so I think that David Fisher had a reluctance to recruit in the first place, and I also think that for most of the old time, the first generation Reform Druids, the RDNA was a wonderful memory from their college years, and they wanted to keep it a quaint little alumni club, they didn't want to let in just anybody. So I suspect that a large part of the, you know, misunderstanding and hostility was generated by the fact, here was somebody that came out of the blue, who never even went to Carleton, who was treating their alumni club as if it were a real religion.
- MS: Yeah, and that's what I've been able to pick up.
- IB: Yeah.
- MS: In fact, you're one of the very few non-Carleton students to actually ordain anybody.
- IB: <laughing>
- MS: The only other I can think of is Stephan and Tezra at the present, and maybe Larry Press. I don't know if any of the other groves, like the Twin Cities grove or the Arch grove...
- IB: Uh, no, Larry Press and Emmon Bodfish in the Orinda grove, they ordained a few people.
- IB: And who was I talking to? Yeah, and Stephan and Tezra have done ordinations. So, really, as far as I can tell, the real hotbed of Reform Druid activity was on the west coast, primarily in the Bay region with my grove and the groves that branched off from it. And also up in Seattle, with Cindy Schuller...
- IB: Yeah, she has a pretty large group there.
- MS: Now, <pause> what happened to all these little groves, like the Arch grove and the acorn grove and these...
- IB: Well, the same thing that happens in nature, a bunch of seeds get planted and some of them sprout, and some of them don't, and of the one's that do sprout some of them get cropped off by the deer real fast.
- MS: <laughing>
- IB: And the ones that manage to survive to become saplings, either prosper or not depending on the rain and the fertility of the soil, and a hundred other things. So if you plant twenty or thirty groves, you're lucky if two or three of them are still running five years later. I didn't realize that at first. The Arch grove lasted for two or three years in St. Louis and then collapsed because the couple who were running it divorced, a situation that is very common the craft but hasn't been so common in the RDNA because we haven't had that many situations where couples were starting a grove. The Twin Cities grove, I believe it kept going for a short period of time after I moved out of the Twin Cities, I believe Avery Grant was running it. And, what ever, its not in existence now, I have no idea at one point it collapsed, my brother might be able to tell us that because I think he stayed in contact with Avery for a while.
- MS: It seems to me almost, I don't know, there seems to been in the early '70s, something around 1972 or so, there seems to been large number of groups that seems to like have almost chucked a lot of the old occult astrology and a whole bunch of other kinds of things that, what Bradley calls were from a Christian matrix attitude and just started fresh, and started digging their hands into the stuff themselves and looking into other cultures. And this is what I've been able to figure out what Neo-Paganism is, kind of a hands-on, fresh start.
- IB: Yeah, I'd say that that's true in many ways. There was an explosion of interest in the occult and simultaneously in witchcraft, Paganism, and folk magic, all intertwined together during the late '60s and early '70s and really the spread of Neo-Paganism is directly traceable to that particular time period, which is when almost all the people who are now big-nosed Pagans first got involved with it.
- MS: Now you've always defined Neo-Paganism as a reconstructive religion based on primarily pre-Christian sources, what were the other kinds of groups that were doing reconstruction in a Neo-Pagan format? I know there's the Source of Eternal Life for the Egyptians.
- IB: Church for the Eternal Source, that's what you mean, the Egyptian folks. They were one of the big groups. Fere-Faeria was another one, Fred Adams was trying to reconstruct his vision of Greek religion. The most influential of course was the Church of All Worlds.
- MS: But that's not really a pre-Christian religion.
- IB: Well, no, they were perfectly willing to admit that they were starting a brand new religion, but they believed that they were inspired by the models of the pre-Christian religions, and expanding them in a modern sense. Tim Zell (now Otter Zell) was important, one of the first people to come up with what became known as the Gaia hypothesis. He actually published material on it before Lovelock did and Zell is the one that actually made the term Neo-Paganism widespread, it was in

the American occult community. The Wiccan movement started out being what I consider Meso-Pagan, and only became Neo-Pagan under the influence of the counter-culture in the United States, when they realized they could drop a lot of the window dressing that had been added to keep the Christians happy.

MS: <laughing> And so the Druids were essentially the Celtic element, but the Wicca was of course using a lot of the Celtic...

IB: But the folks in Wicca claimed that they were Celtic but in point of fact what they were doing was far more Greco-Roman than it was Celtic, and for people in.... Oh, and there was also groups like the Asatru Free Assembly and other folks that were interested in Norse Paganism, they were starting up at about this same time. Unfortunately, they got infiltrated and subverted by Neo-Nazis rather quickly so that most of the, even today, you'll still find that the vast majority of Norse groups are Meso-Pagans, hung up on Aryan, pure-race, bullshit. But yeah, to a certain extent the Druids were the movement in Neo-Paganism for people who were interested in the Celts.

MS: And the RDNA was the only contender in the field at that time.

IB: That's right.

MS: See, that's what I'm very curious about. When I read your early letters, there seems to be a very rushed attitude. I know you were extremely busy in a lot of movements and

IB: <laughing>

MS: ...might have been a little bit upset about what you saw as a set of emergency breaks in the RDNA, on something you couldn't really deal to much time with, but um what was the sense of urgency coming from?

IB: That was a time period that I was fairly firmly convinced that the ecology was in a mess and that this insane macho posturing between the United States and the Soviet Union was libel to blow it all up, and I felt that there was really a strong need to spread the ideas of Neo-Paganism and to spread the techniques of magic to people with Neo-Pagan ethics, as widely as possible as quickly as possible, just for the sheer sake of survival of the planet. And I still feel that today but I don't have quite the sense of urgency I used to, because it is beginning to look like maybe enough magic was done to put the breaks on at least the nuclear threat. And because the ecology movement has begun to be successful, and is beginning to change peoples attitudes. I still feel a sense of urgency but I'm not in my twenties anymore.

MS: Yeah, it's actually quite remarkable what you were doing in your twenties...

IB: <laughing>

MS: I must say.

IB: Yeah, I wish I had that much energy today.

MS: Oh, don't you know it. And so let's, I'm just trying to figure out...

IB: Well, you know I've been doing a lot of research over the last twenty-five years in the history of Wicca. And the more I read about Gerald Gardner and about the atmosphere in the occult community in England during the '40s and '50s and '60s, the more sympathy I'm developing for him. And, Gardner ordained zillions of people, he ordained anybody who'd walk into his living room practically, and the reason he seems to have done so was because he figured that if he

ordained several hundred people, at least a couple dozen of them would be good and would keep his religion going. And I think to a great extent that I was working on much the same principle, the idea that if I ordained a lot of third order priests, that a significant proportion of them would keep it up and go out and start new groves, where they would ordain new people who would go and start new groves. And I thought that this would be a good thing for the planet and for the people involved.

MS: Yes, Bradley was talking about that, he's a very interesting person if you get to talk with him. And he said that there's a certain size for a parish to remain stable, he thinks it's around two hundred people, cause by that point you have at least five or six people who can cover slack in case something goes wrong, versus just one. And one of the things that I think a lot of people were a little bit eerie about, but then I'll talk about the other side, seems to be your role as a nexus point. Stephan also had this complaint raised against him. For instance, most of the Carleton RDNA were unable, for some reason, to contact many of the other, non-Carleton RDNA. And they almost kind of felt like they had to go through you to get there, while it's nice that you actually were there to see actually make it to other people, I don't know, it almost seems like they're...they're kicking the system.

IB: I sent the name, and mailing address and phone number of every person I ordained to the attention of Arch Druid of Carleton.

MS: Right, and there is documents for that.

IB: And, if the people at Carleton didn't bother to contact any of those folks, and never bothered to keep up-to-date mailing lists, you know that wasn't anything I could really take responsibility for. I seem to recall that once every two or three years, I would send as much of an update as I had of current addresses, but there was nothing to stop people at Carleton from contacting any of these people directly, they just never bothered. The groves at Carleton were primarily concerned with Carleton.

MS: Yes, I picked that up...

IB: Which you can understand, running, even if it's a very small grove, you're still running a student organization, and the average college student really doesn't think on a grand scale in terms of "Oh, I'm at the head of a nationwide network and I have to keep the communication lines clear."

MS: <laughing>

IB: No, the average Arch Druid at Carleton, didn't think about that.

MS: Yeah, and you know, I don't know, maybe they're just jealous or they just, I don't know, there is definitely really small minded thinking going on and actually you know that it is one of the good things that you did publish so much stuff, because, as Bradley says "Isaac Bonewits he might have his faults here and there but at least he publishes, gets stuff out on the table."

IB: <laughing>

MS: "You know, you can like him or hate him, but you still at least have something to work with."

IB: Michael Bradley, who is Michael Bradley, why does that name ring a bell?

MS: Arch-Druid of Chicago.

IB: What?

MS: Chicago

IB: Oh right.

MS: He was inducted by McDavid.

IB: He hardly ever answered his mail as I recall.

MS: Yeah, but he was a pretty mellow dude and he and McDavid had a very nice connection with each other and they had a nice little grove for a number of years. And he's in Seattle now.

IB: Is it still functioning?

MS: Oh no, it stopped in '78 and Bradley's now in Seattle and he's going to join Cindy's group sometime in the future. He actually was going to start the humanistic DNA

IB: The HDNA?

MS: Uh huh, and that might have worked really well.

IB: Well at that point there wasn't any Hassidic Druids left so the initial was ok

MS: That would lead to confusion.

IB: Yes, it sure would. But we had a lot of confusion in those days.

MS: <pause> Lineage, how many groups in the '70s were stuck up on lineage?

IB: What, in the Reform Druid community?

MS: And also elsewhere.

IB: Well a sizeable number in the Wiccan community really felt that lineage was important, because that was how they maintained their quality control. Because they were doing everything in secrecy, that being half the fun of being a witch, they didn't have any published standards of qualification for the clergy. And they had no central, because they were decentralized, there was no one address you could write to, to verify if whether or not a person was capable of doing what they said they were. So, the way they maintained any kind of quality of control was to say "well I was ordained by lady so-and so, how was ordained by lady so-and-so, who was ordained by lady such-and-such." And if you knew any of the people along that line of succession, then you could make a reasonable guess as to whether or not this person had been properly trained and initiated. But of course, that only worked within particular denominations, and there were so many people within the Wiccan community who were making up brand new denominations out of thin air, and telling outrageous lies about their ancestry and their families and their childhood training and a lot of other B.S., when they were obviously using stuff they'd ripped off from Gerald Gardner, that it made it impossible to ever verify anything. Now, but the folks that think of themselves as the British Traditionalist, the Conservatives, still to this day think that lineage is still very important, this is their own apostolic succession. On the other hand there were a lot of people who were saying "well no, we're going to make this all up ourselves, and we're going to use published material, and we're going to use material we research ourselves, and we'll put it all together, and we don't care if it's old or new, we like it cause it works." And those folks didn't care about lineage at all. Certainly the folks at Fer-faeria and Church of Eternal Source and The Church of All Worlds weren't worried about lineage, because they knew that they were making brand new religion.

MS: That's why I'm kind of curious about, there has been rumors about Isaac, that one reason you stayed in the RDNA was because it preceded all the other guys. And I think that this is rather a shallow comment.

IB: <laughing> Preceded all the other guys?

MS: Yeah, because the others incorporated '67 and stuff and...

IB: Oh, well incorporations and stuff didn't matter very much. Nobody much was impressed by being incorporated except when it was a chance to gain legal protection for Paganism, then people got impressed by incorporation.

MS: Well, not so much incorporation as foundation.

IB: Yeah, most, Gerald Gardner started his trip, I personally don't think that there was anything preceding him that he was continuing, but even if there was, what he did was a brand new thing, and he essentially started that in the last '40s and early '50s. And the Druid orders, if you want to look at it, if we say that David Fisher came out of the Ancient Order of Druids or one of those offshoots, well that at least goes back to the mid 1700s. But, I never really thought that the apostolic succession was that critical. I have a whole long discussion on varieties of initiation and transmission of the Gnosis or apostolic succession is only one of the three major types of initiation, and it isn't always the most important, the other two being recognition of status already gained and ordeal of transformation. But the point is, no, I didn't stick with the RDNA because I thought the RDNA was older than any of the other Neo-Pagan groups. It was because the archetype, the Druid, really resonated with me, the same way that the archetype of the witch resonates with a lot of other people. It's what I was pulled too, and even when I tried to drop out and stay away from it, I kept getting dragged by the scruff of the neck back into it, kicking and screaming.

MS: It almost seems to me that the SDNA was kind of like the testing groups for ADF in some ways.

IB: Oh, to a great extent. When I sit down and I look through this old material I can see a lot of the ideas that ADF has manifested there in sort of an embryonic stage. And, when I really began to realize that the founders of the RDNA really didn't want it to be a religion, and yet I thought that it seemed obvious to me that it was a religion, I first started experimenting, and I think that the SDNA was my first experiment with that.

MS: Yeah, because I mean there had been lots of RDNA Druids before you who had declared it their own personal religion, it just seems like there was this subtle shift that you're not supposed to, even if you do consider it your own religion, not to advertise the group as a religion. And you want to, well see the thing is, any group after 1967 or so, that grove that founded, whether it was one of yours or one of the Carleton graduates doing it, the majority of the members that they got were of course from SCA, sci-fi, and most of them were Neo-Pagans. I mean, irregardless of the wish, you know, to have lots of smart people get together and just discuss how religions work, the majority of those people are going to be coming from Neo-Pagan tradition. So it's understandable that you'd want to advertise this, so Neo-Pagans wouldn't be confused by the double-talk saying "well we're not a religion, but we're a way to look at religion." And stuff like this, and anyone who's interested in Celticness would say wow, here you go, and they're in. So it's quite understandable from that point of view, and most of the Carleton graduates I've been able to find haven't actually been able to find that kind of attitude of Carleton students to, almost just break down religion and just sit there and look at the basics. That doesn't seem to happen very often with many places, and the only people who really want to use the structure are the people who would actually worship.

IB: Well yeah, if you're going to emphasize the philosophical side of Druidism, then you're going to spend most of your time having intellectual debates, which is lots of fun. We used to do that in the HDNA for a while, we had a hair-pull session, we would get together for the grove meeting, we'd do the ritual and then afterwards we'd come back to my house for a potluck dinner and then after dinner we would read a couple lines from the Mish-Mash and the commentaries on it, and then we would have theological argument for an hour. It was a lot of fun, but we were still doing in within the context of we're Neo-Pagans and we're discussion Neo-Pagan theology. We weren't doing it in the let's keep all this messy religion stuff at an arms length distance, which is what most of the, apparently most of the founders of the RDNA prefer to do.

MS: There also seems like there are a lot of, as you mentioned, Marxists and atheists in the early group, and one of the things that they particularly valued was that... I've always seen it as if you have a bunch of people from all types of religions and un-religions, and you describe the story of a bird making a nest, all religions, because they're faced with the material world all around them, have drawn upon nature for a source for relating to the divine. And philosophies have done so for the same reason, and so one of the things that I've seen at Carleton is that even if you're atheistic or if you're very religious, you can be Christian or anything, they can all get together and draw something out of the simple bird's story that doesn't claim to be part of, or allied to just one group, and so it seems almost, sometimes they describe it as they didn't want Druidism to fall into being a religion, that might just be a little snotty point on their part, that they were above religion, but there seems to have been a fear that it would become narrow, somehow, although you, Robert Larson and yourself were interested primarily in Celtic Indo-European stuff, where as the Carleton grove had a very strong Asian element in it, because the Asian religions were very strongly taught at Carleton. And they pretty much had dropped the Celticness early on, because it had done its purpose. And, I don't know...

IB: Or because that wasn't the interest of the new generations of students coming in.

MS: Right, because of the Asian interest and Vietnam of course made Asian studies much more interesting.

IB: Oh yeah.

MS: And that's why I was always interested...

IB: Well this is one of the reasons why I found the term Meso-Pagan to be so useful, I did not invent that term by the way, a friend of mine in Berkeley who is a Wiccan invented that term, and the Masonic, Rosicrucian, fraternal style groups of Druids in England were Meso-Pagan, what they had was a mixture of Paganism and Christianity and ideas that are rooted philosophically in Christianity, all mish-mashed together and presented as authentic Druidism. In the same way at Carleton you had, the references to nature and the references to the gods and goddesses, but you also had lots of material that was Christian philosophy, liberal Christian philosophy, or Marxist or atheist. Marxism and atheism are also outgrowths of Christianity, Marxism specifically is an outgrowth of the Christian gospel movement of the 1800s, even though Karl Marx would hate to have that said that about it, and atheism is the flip-flop of the dualistic black and white thinking of Christianity, either the Christian god and everything in the bible is true, or there is no god. And you know, as long as somebody calls himself an atheist, they're still playing the game by the Christians rules. In any event,

the point is Reform Druidism, as first invented, was definitely a Meso-Pagan system, whether they called it a religion or philosophy or whatever, it was still Meso-Pagan. And, I thought the world needed Neo-Paganism, and saw this as a good starting point. But as you pointed out, within the first ten years I had tried to start alternative groups, using some of the ideas but also working in some of the ideas from the rest of the Neo-Pagan community. And, screening out the material from Monotheism and monothesisism.

MS: It's a very messy little thing.

IB: Well its amusing that the same people who were telling me that Druidism is a philosophy compatible, with every religion on the earth, were telling me "oh no, it doesn't include Neo-Paganism."

MS: Ah, see, I haven't picked that up.

IB: <laughing>

MS: I've looked for it closely, a lot of the letters between them are saying, you know, I remember Shelton once said that "Neo-Paganism was compatible with Reform Druidism, but doesn't encompass it." It's almost like...

IB: Well we didn't have the term Meso-Pagan in those days.

MS: Well yeah.

IB: Might have made a difference if we had, because then what you see is you see, you can have overlapping sets, make Venn-diagrams of it all. But, I had some of these folks verbally tell me it was totally inappropriate for Neo-Paganism and Reform Druidism to overlap and be the same thing.

MS: Well...

IB: Because they thought <coughing> Hang on... I think that they thought as soon as you brought any kind of "ism" into it at all, it was no longer Reform Druidism. I've often wondered why they didn't use the word Druidry but it may be that the fraternal groups in England hadn't started using that word at that point, I'm not sure about the precise dating of that term.

MS: Well see, the thing is, a lot of them in those years were often young too...

IB: Uh huh, we were all young way back then.

MS: Shelton who was one of the primary ring leaders then, has been very active again in keeping tabs about the Carleton grove since '86, when it was primarily Wiccan and Native American back then. And he has not really had too much trouble with us on that issue, and in-fact he's done a couple sweat-lodges and that kind of stuff.

IB: Cool

MS: And, there were a couple points where he was a little bit concerned, well first of all, you were coming from a different cultural background then he was, and most of the other Carleton Druids. I mean, you are first of all, an intellectual, and they hadn't had very much contact [inaudible], they kind of saw traps in definitions. And, they were in the process of destroying set ideas, they didn't want certainties, and...

IB: Right, well they were still in that early adolescent rebellion stage of being more interested in tearing down then they were in building up. And I can understand that, that's a necessary phase for an adolescent to go through. You have to deconstruct the culture around you before you can reconstruct it, to reflect something that makes sense to you.

MS: Right, and since most Carleton students are between the age of 19 and 20 around, I don't think, I think they were a little bit worried, well see it would be very hard of course to impose

the NRDNA system on Carleton because it's so far away, but I don't think they felt that Carleton students, who didn't have a Neo-Pagan background to being with, were quite ready to reconstruct. And, I don't know, maybe they were just a little protective of the grove, they were...

IB: Well that's perfectly understandable, it was their turf. I mean just on a gut level, animal biological basis, this was their home territory, and if they perceived a threat to it, then they would be defensive.

MS: I think they also were a little bit afraid of their own people getting out of hand too.

IB: How so?

MS: Well, do you remember when Larson, I mean Shelton, tried to pass the Codex Reform?

IB: Very vaguely, yeah

MS: Well he got quite a few letters immediately, letters saying you know, red tape, red tape, you know, and Shelton backed down. Shelton by the way was the first Arch-Druid not to have known the founder. And so they were very careful to make sure that future groups wouldn't lose the original style, and that's probably one reason why they hung around so much. If you hadn't been around, they probably would have been content that no outside influences would've come into Carleton, but...

IB: Right, the fact that I wrote New Apocrypha, sent copies of it to all the members of the order of Dalon Ap Landu, that I could get a hold of, sort of rocked the boat, all of a sudden there was an outside influence.

MS: And an outside authority.

IB: Yeah.

MS: From a completely new tradition.

IB: Yeah.

MS: And so, I think that's one of the main reasons that, in-fact, you have led to a closer bond between the alumni and the present students, which we're quite grateful for.

IB: Well that's a good thing.

MS: In fact, no Carleton group has ever had this much interaction between alumni and students, and we're the oldest, unofficial, student organization at Carleton.

IB: Is the RDNA still unofficial?

MS: Still unofficial.

IB: Oh, that's funny.

MS: We have a...

IB: Wait a minute, they were official at one time, they had a faculty advisor, Messenger

MS: Uh, yes, but we never got our constitutions approved.

IB: You're kidding?

MS: Nope, they uh, they kind of like put them into the "later" file, and then, sigh

IB: Just because Carleton is still legally a church school?

MS: No, that was stopped in '22, it was just the fact that we had a bunch of pig-headed, conservative administrators, especially in the Dean of Men, and they just said "Too wild" and put it aside. But, we also had a Dean of, an advisor with Bardwell Smith, who was an Asian history and religion professor, which of course made it more Asian then ever. But yeah, John Messenger was only around for one year.

IB: Yeah right, and then he went elsewhere.

MS: Perhaps if he would have stayed longer we would have seen different.

IB: That's true, could very well have been different.

MS: Now, I want to talk about the Druid Chronicles (Evolved), you know the more I read that book, the more fascinating it gets, and that's a compliment.

<break in the conversation for call waiting, tape flips>

IB: RDNA, so that tells me in the year 17 y.r., that's what I was doing. We have the constitutions here, records of the Council of Dalon Ap Landu, Arch-Druids of Carleton through Don Morrison, spring '76 to question mark, that's as far as my list goes.

MS: Oh, yeah, did I send you an updated list of the Arch-Druids?

IB: I don't know if you did or not.

MS: Well, he stopped at '78 and that was followed by Sue Olin for a year or so, and then somebody named Heidi Schultz and I don't know, and then Katya Luomala who was incorrectly ordained, because of a drunkard Arch-Druid.

IB: Oops.

MS: Oops, she like showed up like the day and she like, Katya had vigiled and she thought Sue knew about this and...and Sue didn't show up in the morning. And, so Katya found her like halfway through the day and was like, "where were you?" "Oh, I already thought you were a third order.....well here you go, here's the order. And it's like...

IB: Oh...great.

MS: Yeah, I was like, oh boy. Well you can imagine what that did to her ego. <laughing>

IB: <laughing> Let's see, I have my copy here of the names of the Druids, which you probably have a copy of as well, that says who was ordained in which grove, anyway. It says Hal Moe was ordained in the Berkeley grove in 1973, which... could it mean it was either me or Bob, depending on who was running the grove in that year, I don't remember right now. Then we have Cindy and Tom Schuler both ordained by the mother grove in '78, which probably, lets see down here it says...mg equals mother grove SDNA. Ok

MS: One of the things we do generally is we uh, I've seen at Carleton, is that we would do like, for instance for you it'd be BK69:Larson, so we can keep track of these things easier.

IB: Well that would probably make a lot of sense, and it would be nice to try and reconstruct all of this.

MS: yeah, and...

IB: So we actually do have a family tree, but of course, we don't...I have been constantly told over the years about RDNA groves that existed and then disappeared. Like, uh, there was a grove in Palo Alto, California for a while, and there was a grove at uh... oh god, it's an eastern college, starts with a p....

MS: Purdue.

IB: Purdue, there was a grove at Purdue.

MS: Yeah, that was Dick Smiley.

IB: Dick Smiley... see so you know a lot of groves that I don't know.

MS: Well usually I make the family tree by apostolic succession versus worry about groves, because those just move all over the place. In fact, trying to work out the Berkeley thing, which is so darn confusing I gave up, but I uh...

IB: Well you know Joan Carruth could give you a lot that history. I mean obviously filtered through her eyes, but that's going to be true of anybody you ask.

MS: That's true.

IB: Do you have her current address?

MS: uh huh, yep.

IB: ok.

MS: I did an interview with her.

IB: Bob Larson... has vanished.

MS: Yes, he is vanished... showed up in spring, but disappeared again.

IB: Very strange

MS: Very strange, I heard he's over with Asatru now.

IB: Oh, that could make a certain amount of sense, he liked the Norse stuff too.

MS: Yeah.

IB: In which case, I might be able to track him down through the, through...make connections in the Norse community, maybe through...depending upon which group he's in.

MS: But yes, he's disappeared.

IB: ok, let's see here, now I have in addition to all that, I have the...Druid Missal-Any, which was...the one that Emmon Bodfish organized for a while

MS: Which we don't have.

IB: Oh, ok, well I can make copies of those. What did we have here, oh and...a letter from Chris Sherbak that appeared in the Druid Missal-Any. "Dear third order Druid, the Council of Dalon Ap Landu has not had a vote in many years, one of the main problems has been the lack of contact between the head of the Council and the members, many reasons have been given, but the fact remains. I'm sending this letter to all known members of the Council in hopes of resolving this and getting on with business. There can only be two states of participation in my opinion, active and inactive. Our rules do not allow inactive participation yet, I propose we do now. I ask that you please respond to the questionnaire/proxy below. If you wish to remain in active status, please indicate as such, you'll be kept in the Council's mailing list. If you wish to become inactive, please mark and sign the proxy. This is very important, whether or not you are now interested in a Reform, you are still considered to have a vote. This was his effort to get around the impossibility of ever having a quorum...but that didn't work either.

MS: Well a lot of them just felt there wasn't anything more to vote on.

IB: There was nothing more to vote on?

MS: uh huh.

IB: I see <laughing> ok

MS: <laughing> They thought once they got everyone equal status, that was fine.

IB: 1983, so let's see, so these issues are from 1982 and '83. And...then we had the Druid Chronieler, which...

MS: We've got a lot of 'em

IB: You've got a lot of them, ok

MS: But not quite all of them, I'll have to send you...

IB: 1981 seems to be here, December '81...

MS: That's the last one we have.

IB: Yeah, that one was nicely typeset. This was, this is funny, this is really funny, I think this is the one and only issue that was ever done this way, typeset with nice borders around the edges. And this was <pause> this is the last time before I did ADF, when I tried to make major changes inside, Reform Druidism. Oh jeez, it's been years, literally years since I read this. "Isaac Bonewits left the mother grove in '79 because he was moving to Santa Cruz, when he went he appointed Joan Carruth and Stephen Abbot to be co Arch-Druids. Shortly after he left on his sabbatical, Joan and Stephen changed the name to the Berkeley grove." Okay, so it was the Berkeley grove for a long time, then it became the mother grove, then it became the Berkeley grove again. Let's see, "the next year saw Stephen drop out..." See I haven't read this in five or ten years here. "The next year saw Stephen drop out of the Berkeley grove, that was the end of co Arch-Druidship as an experiment in that incarnation. Joan ran for reelection uncontested and spent the last of 18 y.r. and all of 19 y.r. as Arch-Druid of the grove. In the two years since Isaac, the ritual and structure of the grove went relatively unmolested. But then Isaac showed back up and all the rules changed. He ran for the office of Arch-Druid, warning everybody in advance that he planned to make some broad changes in the grove. Even if it can't be said that the gods spoke, there was an omen of sorts, Isaac won. In doing so though, he alienated a large portion of the existing Berkeley grove... they thought the changes were taking Druidism far away from what its founders at Carleton College had intended it to be. That idea made them uncomfortable, so after much thought and discussion they decided to form a new grove. They asked Joan to be their Arch-Druid and she accepted. Thus there are now two groves in Berkeley: the live oak grove which still uses the traditional forms, and the mother grove, which is developing a new philosophy of Druidism for the 1980s." Right, now you have to understand, that part of all of this complexity that was going on is that Joan and I were on-again off-again lovers for many years. So, some of what was happening here was personal politics between the two of us, although fortunately at this point I can't remember any of the details.

MS: <laughing> yeah

IB: Just that Joan is basically a very wonderful person.

MS: Uh huh, oh I should tell you that...

IB: So you have this issue.

MS: Uh huh.

IB: Ok, that's good, because that is really, in terms of... history of the shift from Reform Druidism to ADF, this is really critical.

MS: Yes

IB: In any event...right Sally <pause> Sally was the Arch-Druidess at the same time as I was the Arch-Druid. Let's see, she was a server in 18yr <pause>

MS: Could we reconstruct these things a little bit later...

IB: Oh, I'm sorry, go ahead, continue with your, your list of questions you had for the interview.

MS: Ok, one of the interesting things that the Druid Chronicles is, I don't think you know this side of the story, is about the same time I believe in '74, '75 when you started Druid Chronicles going, we lost ours. We lost all the Archives, and they were a little bit afraid to tell you this... and apparently Steve Corey taking 'em all up to the Twin Cities without appointing another person at Carleton to take his place. And so all of the

records were seemingly lost for two or three years. And everyone had to rely on their own personal copies of everything, and they were really afraid that your version of the Druid Chronicles would eventually become the only source of information.... And they again found them about two years later, and then I almost can tell the animosity suddenly dropped in the letters.

IB: Well, I find that fascinating, because, you know, I didn't change anything in the Chronicles of the Foundation. I was meticulous in making sure that it was the same word-for-word, the only difference being that...I stuck in footnotes.

MS: Uh huh, no big deal.

IB: Yeah... then I added a bunch of other stuff, but you know, I always thought it's really critical in the history of any religion that you have accurate history. So I always thought it was important that we document what we were doing, while we were doing it.

MS: Yeah, and there's a lot of really good little turkeys, as you call them, in there.

IB: <laughing>

MS: And, I think in there, well even though you do say in the Apocrypha that you intended people to stick in their own stuff later on, some of them are a little bit bitter that... it almost looks like a one-sided argument. Because...

IB: Hey! I didn't stop them from sending Apocrypha around.

MS: I know, they're just a little bitter. <laughing> But otherwise it...

IB: "The editor has been informed that there are other Apocrypha currently being printed for distribution. Assuming that each has a date of writing attached, it should be easy to insert them into there proper order vis-à-vis those included in this edition." One of the things that the people who were hostile about this production never seemed to mention or think about was the fact that we deliberately designed it so that it could be punched and put in a three-hole notebook.

MS: right

IB: Thus implying that there would be alternate version. Oh well...

MS: Uh huh, they, I don't know, they were a little bit anarchistic, you know, any kind of... putting it all together in one book, just kind of, I don't know, grated on their nerves a little bit. But actually, its proved to be an extremely durable and reliable source for a lot of the groves which still use it. In fact, Carleton, in 1986, used it as their sole blueprint to rebuild, because we had lost the Archives again, and couldn't find them, so we used the Druid Chronicles (Evolved), as a blueprint, which of course gave our group a very Neo-Pagan flavor.

IB: Yeah, I would think so <laughing> it would have that effect.

MS: And in that sense, I think maybe the guys at Carleton were a little bit... correct in their view that, you know, once... this book gets out...

IB: No, it's not a matter of once the book being out, it's a matter of distribution. I specifically made it a point to send copies to the library at Carleton.

MS: We actually had a copy for a while.

IB: Yeah, I also specifically designed this so it could be xeroxed, that was the primary reason we typeset it, actually I typeset the whole bloody thing with my own little fingers. And if I had realized then how badly things that were printed on dark colored paper would Xeroxed, we would have never used the dark colored paper for...

MS: Yeah, that's proved troublesome.

IB: Yes

MS: We had to type it up again, and print them up separately.

IB: I'm not surprised.

MS: But yes... and luckily you never made any kind of attempt on here to call it The Druid Bible.

IB: Nah

MS: You remember what caused that trouble with The Witches Bible?

IB: Yes, right, right

MS: And the whole big thing was that they used the simple word "the" versus "a"

<pause>

IB: Right, and point in fact, that wasn't their decision, that was the publishers decision... but that's another tale..

MS: It's amazing how nitpicky some Druids can get.

IB: Special order of worship Santa Cruz gathering, wow I have a whole bunch of stuff in here, I'll have to bring this with me. <laughing>

MS: Oh yeah, please do.

IB: What I'm planning on doing at this point, if we get this trip together for April...

MS: And it looks like it is very possible, I'm already getting the funding process going.

IB: Ok, I'm going to try very hard the week before I come out there, to gather as much of this historical material as I possible can, and I will bring it with me. In fact, I will carry the more important items on the plane with me as carry-on baggage, so that I will have my hands on them the entire time. And then once I have arrived...anything that I haven't Xeroxed, we can Xerox for you. Anything that you don't have yet.

MS: Yeah, and the school's going to pay for all that Xeroxing, isn't that wonderful?

IB: I think that's terrific.

MS: <laughing> So why don't we, let's see here, I have one more question here, do I? <pause> Okay, what would you say, let's just get this last question, what would say the special, what is special about the RDNA among Neo-Pagan groups? <pause> What would make it worth studying, if you were a Neo-Pagan scholar? Besides the fact that you were in it.

IB: <pause> Probably I would simply say it was worth studying because it was the ancestral group that a bunch of other Druid groups grew out of. A lot of that being my fault, but some of it possibly not being my fault. The fact that it was the... you know, it was a different strand of development of what was to become the Neo-Pagan community.... I think that it is a good example of the fact that certain ideas were in the air in that particular time in history. Of course, you can also get, you know the great arguments they have between the great man theory, the inevitable historical movement theories. Unfortunately you can argue both ways from this situation.

MS: How so?

IB: That from the, from the point of view that this was a time of great, you know, of certain ideas being in the air, you can say that the RDNA showed that people were looking for a

religious expression that, had a reverence for nature and yet also had a reverence for human individuality and freedom, which puts it in a similar boat with all the other Neo-Pagan movements. And from the, history is made by individual's point of view, you can point to either David Fisher or myself, or even Bob Larson for that matter, as having been critical in making, changing this from being a tiny little club at a small Midwestern college, to actually being a tiny, but noisy, and influential movement inside of the Neo-Pagan community as a whole. So you could argue it both ways. I don't think of myself as a great man you understand, but I was the person, in that place, at that time, and... I discovered the RDNA at about the same time that I was discovering the Neo-Pagan community, and to me they both seemed to be an obvious match.

MS: Well, ok... I think were going to stop the official interview there and just do some details here now.

<end of first interview>

Second Interview with Isaac Bonewits

by Michael Sharding
on February 23, 1994
Carleton College Archives
Oral History Project
Transcription by Sancho Cochran-Bond
Lightly edited for clarity

IB= Isaac Bonewits
MS= Michael Scharding



Figure 5 Isaac & Sam Adams at Hill 3 Oaks, 1994.

NOTE: See Green Book 10 from Part 6 of ARDA 2 for more interviews with Isaac Bonewits.

MS: Ok, it's February 23rd, 1994, and this is Michael Scharding interviewing Isaac Bonewits, a prominent Druid member and best RDNA mover. Hello.

IB: < laughs >

MS: Ok, the goal of my paper is to try to... well it's going to be pretty big... essentially, fill a gap in the present academic study of Druidism, as a part of Neo-Paganism.

IB: I didn't know that there was any academic study of Druidism.

MS: That's what I figured. I mean, outside of your [Druid Chronicles \(Evolved\)](#), I do not believe there has ever been a really good synopsis of American Druidism. And you had to look, really hunt through encyclopedias to get anything more out of ... than that. In the major, you know, non-Druid publications. As far as I could tell...

IB: Well, it's, you know, it's a very tiny movement. I mean

MS: Dear to my heart.

IB: Maybe, dear to our hearts, but if you include all the people who have ever considered themselves members of an RDNA Group or offshoot thereof, maybe, if you're being real generous, you'd have a couple thousand people.

MS: Yeah, So I guessed.

IB: Now that's not much in a nation of two hundred and fifty million.

MS: No it isn't... But yes, that is true. It's really tiny. And some of them...

IB: But special

MS: Yes. Ok, I have read a few little biographies about you, but for the benefit of the listeners, could you like, maybe briefly, go over your life in four minutes? <laughs>

IB: Ooooo. That's extremely difficult to do, actually.

MS: Oh, I'm sorry, Ok.

IB: Let's see, I was born in Royal Oaks, Michigan. An appropriate birth place for a future Arch-Druid I suppose. When I was eleven, my family moved to southern California, and I went with them, not having anything better to do at the time. At sixteen, I went to the University of California in Berkley as a sophomore, I graduated in spring of nineteen seventy, with a bachelor of arts degree in "Magic and Thaumaturgy." And then I wrote my first book, [Real Magic](#), which was published in 1971, and it has been in and out of print ever since.

MS: Which I would like a copy of. I've read it, but I don't have a copy.

IB: Go to your nearest B.Daltons, or Waldenbooks, it's in all the big chain stores.

MS: Oh, it is being re-published again?

IB: Oh yeah, it's been in print for several years now. Weiser Publications has it out.

MS: Is that your actual Bachelor's Thesis?

IB: No, at that point they didn't have a requirement for a senior thesis, although in point of fact I did turn a couple of term papers, that I had written for different classes in my program, into the skeleton that I grew a couple of chapters around. Which you can sort of tell, if you read looking for that. Let's see, in 1973, I went to Minneapolis for the first of what was to become the Pagan festival movement. The first Pagan festival that I am aware of, anyway. Which was the Gnosticon Festival, that Carl Wesky of Lewellyn Publications started. This was like an indoor convention. It was not an outdoor camping festival, like we're used to know. But, at that time, he had invited me to move to Minneapolis, and take over editing his in-house magazine

MS: Gnostica

IB: Gnostica. Well it was then called Gnostica News, I turned it into Gnostica, edited it for about a year and a half, and then quit over various issues involving... different visions of what the magazine was supposed to be, let's just put it that way. He brought me in to raise the quality of the magazine. I did, and he started losing readers, He should not have been surprised. In any event... Let's jump back just a little bit, it was in the late sixties that I met Robert Larson, who was a Graduate of Carleton, and who had been an early, but not a founding member of the grove there. He initiated me into the RDNA in, I think, 1968. I made third order, around the full moon of October of '69. So, let's see, I just celebrated my 25th anniversary as an RDNA priest, I think.

MS: Congratulations!

IB: I survived to tell the tale. In any event, at that time, I felt pretty much that RDNA was Pagan, whether it was that obvious to the members then or not. I moved to Minneapolis, I lived in Minneapolis for two years, I started up a grove there, and then, helped a couple of other people start other groves in other places.

MS: That would be...

IB: Traveled around, initiated a whole bunch of people.

MS: And we're still trying to piece together it.

IB: I know, I'm going to try to go through my... I actually have pretty good records... they just are all buried in files that I can't reach because of the other piles of paper in front of them. I will try to get them to you in time to be of some value for your thesis. In any event, let's see, I think I started out with something called the Schismatic Druids of North America, the SDNA,

MS: Which was the group underneath the Provisional Council of Arch-Druids.

IB: Right. I discovered this since, the Council of Dalon Ap Landu, wrote it's by law so that changes could only be made by a quorum of the entire Council, not a quorum of those that could be found. That it had essentially paralyzed itself, and made it impossible to accomplish anything. So that was when I then attempted to start up a Provisional Council.

MS: Yes, did that ever accomplish anything?

IB: I'm not sure it did actually. Other than, a bunch of us exchanging letters back and forth.

MS: Well, that's what normally ends up happening.

IB: In any event, I cannot recall the precise sequence between starting up the SDNA, and the HDNA, the Hasidic Druids of North America in St. Louis. That was roughly the same time, in '74, '75, and early '76. Then, when I went back to California, I believe I started referring to, I was reelected the Arch-Druid of the Berkeley grove there, around 1976. I'm not really certain on a lot of these dates, I'm afraid. In any event, I went back to California... I know I went back to California in '76... Cause, I was there in time for the bicentennial fireworks. I became Arch-Druid of the Berkeley group, we started referring to it as the NRDNA, since people found that a little less silly sounding than, SDNA or HDNA. And then some of the other people who I had ordained started up groups, and they were referring to these groups as NRDNA, too. Although it was never really... None of these groups was ever particularly structured. Obviously it was in 1976 that I produced the "Druid Chronicles (Evolved)." At least I believe that's the date it has on the front cover. Now, what I'm confused about, is exactly how the printing got done. I can't remember whether I did the typesetting in

Minneapolis, or in Berkeley. But Bob Larson and I printed the one and only printing of it that was ever done. And we did that at his print shop, that he was working in, in Berkeley, in Lughnasadh of 1976. So, I can't really, at this point remember the sequence, I'll have to go back through files and see if I can find some letters that talk about more precise dating for that. In any event, in the middle 1970s I was back in Berkeley. We had a grove there for a while. As I recall, there was.. I was trying to make the group disciplined, and there wasn't a whole lot of interest in that. And, I was trying to get people to start taking it as a serious religion, and there wasn't a whole lot of enthusiasm for that either.

MS: Did they consider themselves a religion at that point?

IB: Most of them did, yes. The things that specifically characterized all the offshoots I was responsible for was that we said in our own definition that we were a religion. That it wasn't just a philosophy, that it was in fact a religion. Probably, the thing that specifically characterized them was that they were Pagan religions, identifying themselves as part of the Neo-Pagan community. Whereas the old RDNA never did that. <pause> Now, somewhere along in here, I think in the early seventies, Bob Larson got involved with a group of celtophiles, who ran something called Clan na Brocheta, which was primarily a Renaissance Fair group, who performed music and theater at the Renn. Faires. And, he became their resident Arch-Druid, and he started referring to it as the Orthodox Druids of North America, because they were doing things in Irish. There was only the one group of them, as far as I know, that ever existed, but.. and it was only a tongue and cheek reference, I don't think he ever filed any papers with..., but I think they did occasionally refer to themselves in print as the Clan Na Brocheta Grove of the ODNA. <pause> So, let's see, I suffered burn out, spun out and crashed at some point in the late seventies, I believe. There was a major explosion in the Druid group in Berkeley, and I just got sick of the politics, and quit. Now, I believe, off and during these times, I was publishing various things called the Druid Chronicler, and the Pentalpha Journal and Druid Chronicler. We can get some more dates out of those. So it must have been 1980 or '81 that I burned out on Druidism for a while. In fact I burned out on the whole Magical community for a while. I sold a large part of my occult library, and invested the money in computer books.

MS: Your, excuse me, your what? Your what all?

IB: Occult Library, the books I had on Magic and Religion.

MS: Oh, OK.

IB: I got rid of quite a few of them at that point, and used the money to buy books on computers. And taught myself some marketable job skills, and started earning a living for the first time in my life. Or at least for the first time in several years. Then I moved back and forth across the country a few times. Doing computerized typesetting and layout work, small business consulting, technical writing, a little of this, a little of that. And eventually, in 1984, I mentioned to Shenain Bell, who I had met in an Irish class in New York City, some of the things that Jim Duran had told me about Druid survivals in the Baltic Territories. Druid in the loose generic sense of Indo-European Clergy. And Jim had said that, if you took the material that was available in the Soviet archives on Pagan survivals in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and combined it with the [Carmina Gadelica], dating materials, and the surviving Celtic sagas, you could pretty much reconstruct eighty or ninety percent of what old time Druidism had really been about. And, I mentioned that to Shenain, and he got

very excited and he started discussing it with other friends, and the next thing I know, people were saying, lets start up another Druid group, and I said, oh no, not again. It's very hard to explain this rationally, but over and over again in my life, I've felt someone picking me up by the scruff of my neck and dragging me back into Druidism. So, whether it was the Earth Mother, or Be'al, or someone else, with a capital "S." I was given to know that this was something that had to be done. So that's when I started up ADF, and I deliberately choose the name of Ar nDraiocht Fein to make it very clear that no, I was not hijacking Reform Druidism as I had been accused of in the past, that we were starting something brand new, that we would proudly date ourselves to that year.

MS: That was 1984?

IB: I believe that was 1984. Might have been '83, but I think it was '84.

<to someone else> Yeah when where we meeting?

<someone else>: our meeting in the village was '83 so the ... no it was '82. Shenain says founded in '83, but I think it '84. you dated wrong I think it was earlier than that.

IB: I dated from Samhain of '84.

<Someone else>: ...Association in April of '86

IB: Ok, April of '86, my wife says, is when we.. '87.. was when we signed the articles of association, and made ADF a legal entity, on a water bed yes. The first board of trustees meeting was held on a water bed, we thought that suitably Pagan. It was also the only quite room in the house. We were at a party with some friends. And then in <off> 1989 we incorporated?

<Someone else>: Here, in this house.

IB: I'm consulting my off-line memory here.

<Someone else>: No, I was already off the board, and I didn't leave the board until...

IB: So it was '91. I'll have to look it up for you. It was '90 or '91 that we incorporated,

<Someone else>: I think it was '91

IB: and we got tax status last year, I believe, so we're now a 501c3. OK, That's a very brief and disjointed look at my history with Reform Druidism in terms of organizational, such as it is, structure.

MS: Ok, one of the things I have to do in my paper is... First of all, I have to prove that, I call it American Druidism, which is not the best term I could use, but it's the one I used, as including the RDNA, NRDNA, and everything else there, ADF and Keltria. Now, you just mentioned that you chose the name Ar nDraiocht Fein, as being, to avoid seeming that you were hijacking Reform Druidism, now does that mean that there was no connection with Reform Druidism?

IB: No, it means that, I really got worn down, with year after year after year after year of the older members of the RDNA feeling that I had done something terrible to their creation. And so, I decided that if we called it something else, it would not be something that people would automatically associate with all the other Reform Druids. Now, I borrowed some bits and pieces of the RDNA liturgy, because I'd been using it for twenty years.

MS: I believe mostly the blessing of the waters,

IB: The blessing of the waters, we used the catechism of the waters, and we used the consecration, we used the sacrifice prayer, but, the thing that's interesting is, it's been a matter of evolution that we started out with that material, and as I did

more research into Celtic studies and Indo-European studies, we started modifying it. So, although the standard liturgical design is recognizable, that's mostly because the standard liturgical design in Indo-European cultures is pretty much the same, whether you're talking Pagan or Christian.

MS: And what is that basic structure?

IB: Ooooo.

MS: Without getting too complicated.

IB: That's a whole long lecture. Five basic phases, two liturgies. Now I might want to go so far as to say it's a global, but I'm not going to stick my neck out on that. I will say that I'm very familiar with it in terms of Indo-European religious ceremony.

MS: I think I've read these somewhere before, but could you...

IB: You probably have. There in one of... There's a whole long discussion of it in DP 2 I believe, or 4. The five basic phases to liturgy, that is to say worship ritual, the first phase is establishing sacred space and time. The second phase is reconstructing the cosmos and opening the gates between the worlds. The third main phase is generating energy, offering praise to that which is worshiped. The fourth main phase is a return flow of energy from the entity, or entities worshiped. And, the fifth main phase is unwinding the energy patterns that were created prior to that. Now that's very loose.

MS: That's very loose.

IB: And if you're going to quote me, I'd rather you quoted from the written material. <laughs>

MS: Yes, I understand. All right, and you say this is more the reason why the liturgies are similar between ADF and NRDNA?

IB: Well, the RDNA liturgy is in many ways, is clearly based on a Christian pattern. And the liturgy as ADF does it is based in part on that, but more in part of what I could reconstruct from dating ritual. And the few references that we have to Druidic ceremony. The ones that appear authentic. <Pause> Now in terms of the terminology that I use today, I consider the RDNA to have been a Meso-Pagan Organization. Now, Paleo-Pagan, and Meso-Pagan, and Neo-Pagan, are not clear-cut divisions. There's no sharp dividing line between those categories. They're points on a spectrum that blends imperceptibly. I believe, and this is what I want to find out from you, if you've managed to discover it: I believe that David Fisher came from a family of people involved in the United Ancient Order of Druids, or one of the other related fraternal offshoots.

MS: David Fisher, as far as I know, refuses to answer anything. So I can't... or maybe it's just bad addresses, but it just doesn't seem to work. I've talked with Norman Nelson who was a Mason, and he says there ain't nothing that looks Masonic, but as I am not a Mason I cannot possibly figure it out.

IB: Ah, OK.

MS: And Gordon Melton has not replied.

IB: In the past, I was in the habit of referring to the various Meso-Pagan Druid groups in England as being Masonic/Fraternal Druids. That was probably much too loose of language on my part. The cross over is easy to make in England, where for centuries it's been common for somebody whose interested in metaphysics and the occult to belong to more than one group simultaneously. There are obvious similarities to Masonic ritual in the surviving United Ancient Order of Druids ceremonies that I have seen scripts of. That is to say, the style

of language is very similar, the style of ceremony is very similar, the images are different. So a modern day Mason, looking at those would not see the similarities. But, certainly I don't think the United Ancient Order of Druids has considered itself a Masonic organization in 200 years.

MS: Yes, mostly charitable, I think.

IB: What?

MS: Charitable organization.

IB: yeah, well a charitable, a fraternal organization. So, I believe that I can see from the earliest Ur text rituals, that David Fisher was probably working from one of the liturgy books of the AOD. And, that combined with his insistence that Druidism was a philosophy applicable to any religion, which is almost a direct quote from the AOD, makes it fairly clear that he was starting out with that, what I call Meso-Pagan approach. The mixing of Celtic Paganism with extremely liberal Christianity. Actually Unitarianism, it turns out.

MS: I always thought of it as Deism.

IB: A lot of Deism, too. I don't know, did you get the magazine that the British Council of Druid Orders put out?

MS: Druid's Voice.

IB: They published an article, in one of the issues that they sent me, on the Iolo Morganwg activity with the Unitarians. It turns out that he was one of the early Unitarian agitators.

MS: Ok, that makes sense.

IB: And he thought of Unitarianism, and Druidism as being essentially the same thing. So, that kind of an approach of mixing whatever they might have had, or fantasized they had that was Pagan, with liberal Christianity, is really characteristic of what I call a Meso-Pagan approach.

MS: Yeah, I agree with you.

IB: It's roughly the equivalent to what was done with Voudoun, and Macumba and Santeria where you mixed Paganism and Christianity, in their case for survival. I think it was partly done for survival, in terms of public relations, in England, but it was also done because the guy who invented most of it was an agitator in the ultra-liberal wing of Christianity. And he saw the Druids as being exemplars he could point to, that English men would be... now this is sexist, of course... that English men would be proud of, and willing to follow the example of. So, in any event, RDNA started out Meso-Pagan. And it was, I will have to admit, it was probably due to my agitating, that it began to move in the direction of being Neo-Pagan. Because I was the one who first, to my knowledge anyway, wrote to any of the older members and said, hey this looks like a Pagan religion here, why don't we admit that it's a religion, and learn what we can learn from the other people in the Neo-Pagan community.

MS: Well, the Neo-Pagan community was not extremely well known at that time, or was it?

IB: Well, that's true. No, it was not particularly well known at that time, and I did not understand, as most people don't when they're young and involved in some kind of a cultural movement, just how tiny the pond was that I was swimming around in.

MS: Well, most of them seem to have pretty much grown out of this thing, I still remember being warned in 1989, stay away from Isaac. But, I think most of the people have pretty much forgotten the incident by this point.

IB: Wait a minute? What incident?

MS: Oh, the letter incident. The 1974 letter. There are just like dozens of letters in the Archives here about that. The initial reactions were pretty strong.

IB: Oh, when I published my letters and Reform Druidism was a Pagan religion and should admit it.

MS: Yeah.

IB: Yeah. I had no idea that that was going to provoke that kind of a reaction. I didn't even get most of the reaction, most of it seems to have gone completely past me, people talking to each other, and not bothering to send me a copy.

MS: I wasn't sure about that.

IB: I saw, maybe a dozen letters, all told, during that whole controversy. You probably have a much better picture of it than I did at the time.

MS: What is your impression of what happened to the NRDNA during the beginning of the eighties? It seems to have disappeared, or gone into what they call the boring years.

IB: The Boring Years, yeah. The San Francisco Bay regions in many ways is similar to England, a terrible thing for a Celtophile to say, but true, in that there were a certain number of people who were interested in the occult and unusual religions, and many of them belonged to each other's groups, and a lot of the activity that took place, took place at the instigation of actually a rather small circle of people. I think, what basically happened was: after the Berkeley grove blew up, that the Orinda Grove continued to survive off and on, but that was like five or six people, I think. Larry Press is the one to ask questions about the Orinda Grove. And, I believe they existed, off and on, to this day. Stephan always had a grove operating out of his back yard. Where ever Stephan Abbot was, he would say there was a grove. But, in point of fact, the grove actually existed only on those occasions when Stephan was in the mood to throw a ritual. And, it was essentially, you know, a charismatic following of whoever was hanging out with Stephan at the time.

MS: When was this starting? When did this Steven come in?

IB: Stephan Abbot? Oh god, he goes way, way, way, way back. Way back. He may go back to the very beginnings of the Berkeley Grove, I mean late sixties/early seventies at least. I lived next door to him for a while. We were roommates in a house for a while. We had a lot of interaction together. There was a time period when the Hazelnut Grove, and the Berkeley Grove were functioning simultaneously. And then, when the Berkeley Grove blew up, Stephan insisted that he would keep ceremonies going, and I think he did for a while. Then, Stephan, who has never had a very good grasp of real world economics, and therefore has been homeless on many occasions, or has had to move rapidly from one home to another home, as he moved around, his supposed grove moved with him. But, I was shocked to discover that he actually got around to buying a post office box in San Jose for his current grove, but his phone was recently disconnected, so I have no idea where he is. This is something that happens fairly commonly.

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MS: We're back again.

IB: Stephan and Tezra, both know my feelings about them, but I don't necessarily want that shared with whoever might happen to hear the tape.

MS: So, I hate to bring this up, but what is the explosion of the Berkeley Grove?

IB: I can't remember.

MS: I think it has something to do with two people wanting to be Arch-Druid, or something, at the same time? But that's the only [person] I had.

IB: It was a... I'm going to have to look it up for you, there was a bitterly contested election for Arch-Druid, I had been out of town for a long time, I came back, a lot of the people in the grove wanted me to take over as Arch-Druid again, others wanted the person who had been Arch-Druid for the preceding couple of years to be reelected [Joan]. They held an election, and I think I won by one vote. That's the sort of thing that blows up small groups. And there were also some major personality conflicts going on between some of the organizers, I was trying to accomplish, on a smaller scale, many of the things that I have since done with ADF, and although there were three or four people folks in the group who were enthusiastic about that, the rest of them just didn't see it as being what they wanted to do with Druidism. So, all that got tied into the elections. Then there was a ritual that was going to be done on the beach, that wound up evolving a very long walk, and I think it's now called the Death March. That was Stephan's usual poetic exaggeration. To get to the spot where... I think it was Joan, I don't think it was Nina... It was Joan's decision that there was a specific spot on the beach that was absolutely perfect, and we saw no reason why a bunch of healthy people couldn't walk a mile. Well, one of them wasn't so healthy, but she wasn't the one who complained. That was a young lady who had Polio, and was used to walking along after other people and keeping up. In any event, that was just one more excuse for people who thought I was turning into a rigid religious fanatic, and they wanted nothing to do with it. <pause> What? Make a sacrifice for your religion? How un-American?

MS: Let me just get Henge of the Keltria out of the way here. I heard something about the twelve messages tacked onto your van or something, at PSG. What was your reaction to the Keltria? It was not quite a defection, but...

IB: It was a schism. Actually, though I was slightly annoyed at the time, I fairly rapidly came to see it as a very healthy thing. I figure any religion that has new religions spinning off from it is obviously doing something right. I mean that's a healthy sign for any organization, that it produces offspring. You know, mutations. The people who started Keltria seemed to be more interested in focusing on Celtic rather than Pan-Indo-European approaches to the material. At the time, I think they were quite a bit looser in their attitudes about what kinds of scholarship to accept. And they wanted to do rituals that were more reminiscent of Wicca than what I thought reconstructed Druidism should be. They also had some major disagreements with us over the organizational function and structure of ADF. Now, in the years since they split off, they have come to be more and more similar to ADF, in that... they discovered that some of the organizational rules that I had instituted, I had instituted for very good reasons. That it's the nature of social organizations, whether religious or non-religious to behave in certain ways, and if you plan for it ahead of time you can prevent quite a few headaches. And, I believe, possibly stung by one or two rude comments of mine on the topic, they've taken more and more of the Wiccan/Cabbalistic, non-ancient stuff out of their ceremonies, and tried to put more authentic material into their ritual. I can't say that for sure because I haven't been to a Keltrian ritual, but from the discussions I've had on the phone with Tony, I've gathered that Keltrian ritual, now,

does not resemble Wiccan ceremony near as much as it used to.

MS: It doesn't, no. It doesn't seem to be very closely related at all.

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IB: No, the first schism from ADF was Shadow Path Grove in Connecticut, which spun off independently because they didn't really want to run an open grove, which is how ADF Groves are structured. They wanted a closed coven style group, and they didn't want to go public and invite total strangers to show up and participate.

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IB: Schisms from ADF. So the first schism was Shadow Path Grove, that was, I can't remember the year. Then was Keltria. Then the next one was Druidactios.

MS: That's a split off?

IB: Yes.

MS: Oooh! Interesting.

IB: Much to the... It's difficult to get the guy who started it, Tom Cross to admit it, but he was in point of fact a member of ADF [and the NRDNA.]

MS: Oh, does that mean I have to include him in the Definition of American Druidism?

IB: Yes and No. His group doesn't exist anymore.

MS: I heard actually that it does.

IB: Oh yeah? Well, the last I had heard from him, he had announced that he was converting back to Catholicism, and that all real Celts would be Irish Catholics, if they were real Celts. And his second in command, whom he had begged to take over the group had left it in disgust, and started his own Roman Paganism group. That's Ernie Didwell, who now lives in Arizona. An old time Neo-Pagan founding father of the community, in fact. In any event, Tom Cross... You should have the copy of DP that had, what did I call it, a forest full of groves, a discussion of other Druid organizations.

MS: I don't actually have all the issues, I don't believe.

IB: Oh, well tell me which ones you don't have and I'll try to get them to you. I though I sent you a full set.

MS: I'll have to get back to you on that one.

IB: In any event, Tom Cross, like many another person, has erroneously assumed that I am Jewish. Because he's anti-Semitic, he thought it was horrifying that somebody who was Jewish could be running a Druid organization. In point of fact, I'm not Jewish, but it has stirred up that same controversy on many occasions in my life.

MS: How is Druidactios a split off? Besides the fact that he was an ADF member?

IB: He was an ADF member. He started out using a lot of our materials, and then gradually replaced it with his own materials. He decided he wanted to do Gaulish Druidism. And since there's almost nothing known about it, it gives him plenty of room for him to improvise. What he essentially did was, he started up a Celtic version of the Norse Meso-Pagan groups.

MS: That's what I figured.

IB: It was the same, the racism and the emphasis on blood and family and the sexism. You've read his book? The Sacred Cauldron?

MS: I have read The Truth About Druids, and I have glanced through The Sacred Cauldron at a friend's house.

IB: One of the things that's really funny is that one of his major objections to ADF was that we used comparative Indo-European Studies as one of our sources of inspiration, and he thinks that that's a terrible thing to do, that we should only use Celtic materials, and then proceeds to put rituals in his book that are essentially thinly Celticized versions of Nordic fire rituals. In any event, I committed a major crime with him in that I was not... a) he thought I was Jewish, b) I wasn't anywhere as impressed by him as he thought I should be. In any event, so he started up Druidactios. I saw their mailing list at one point, they never had more than about forty people on the mailing list, and two dozen of those where exchange subscriptions with other Pagan publications. He only put out like two or three issues of his journal.

MS: Do you have copies of those?

IB: I believe I might.

MS: Because I would like copies of those.

IB: I have at least a copy of one. He seemed to spend an enormous amount of time writing poison pen letters, about me and other people in the Pagan community, who didn't immediately acknowledge his superiority.

MS: That's what I kind of picked up.

IB: I mean, it was just thoroughly unprecedented, unpleasant yerker. I think is the technical, scientific, theological term. In any event,

MS: Are there any other schisms?

IB: I think that's it. Currently. For all I know there may soon be others. I mean, certainly we get, I get letters from people who say that, you know, they're starting a new group and they're borrowing stuff from us. And that's perfectly fine with me, that was one of the things that I expected to have happen with ADF.

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IB: ...out as having been a member of ADF, I had no indication that he had any background in Druidism prior to the membership in ADF, I could be wrong. I would have to go look up his membership records.

MS: It's a bit too late for me to stick him in my paper, except in the end notes.

IB: But he was upset that we had a non-racist, non-sexist policy, he thought our politics were too liberal. His politics were slightly to the right of Attila the Hun. And I'm liberal.

MS: OK, let's get some statistics on the ADF.

IB: OK.

MS: What are the number of paid members in the ADF, roughly?

IB: That has vacillated wildly. At the moment, I believe the current number of paid members is around 250. With a roughly equal number of paid subscribers to the Druids Progress, and about a seventy to eighty percent overlap. Not all the members subscribe to DP, and not all subscribers of DP are members. What I have discovered however is that this is not actually, necessarily, the most important statistic. I found this out by discussing the topic with Unitarians, and a few other people in other groups at the World Parliament of Religions, in terms of the impact that ADF has, it's sometimes more interesting to look, not at the total number of people who have purchased memberships in the organization, but the people who consider themselves part of the tradition. That is

to say, we have about a dozen chartered groves right now, that is to say February of '94. Eight of those groves, at least, are having regular meetings at which anywhere from twenty to sixty or seventy people show up. And those people consider themselves members of the local grove, even though there might be only five or six of them in a given grove, who officially join ADF. So, in terms of the people who have been in ADF and consider themselves ADF Druids, they just haven't gotten around to renewing, and/or the ones that are too cheapskate to buy memberships, but they still want to have the access to the traditions, written and other material. We're probably closer to around a thousand to twelve hundred. Normally, in most religions you would say followers, but we don't have much in the way of followers in the Pagan community. Most Pagan's don't approve of following.

MS: Don't want to go into other Druid groups right now, but... Might as well get them out of the way. OK, what other Druid groups are there presently in the United States, and do you consider them to be in the same category as the RDNA, ADF, and Keltria?

IB: It all depends on how we define our terms. The largest by far is the United Ancient Order of Druids, which still has several thousand members in the US, clustered mainly in Ohio and California. They're a fraternal organization like the Koanas Club, or the Lions, or the Elks. They don't have anything to do with us, even though I've written to them occasionally and exchanged nice letters, they're not connected to the Pagan community at all, to the best of my knowledge. The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, which was very definitely Meso-Pagan when it started out is becoming increasingly Neo-Pagan, under the influence of it's current chosen chief, Philip Carr-Gomm, who is a heck of a nice guy. I'm currently reading his book, that he just published, his new one, called The Druid Way.

MS: Very good book.

IB: Excellent, I'm really enjoying it. Even though I get annoyed when he occasionally throws these things in: "Ancient Druids believed..." and it's one of these things that was invented in the 1700s. But, other than that I'm really enjoying the book a lot. I'd say the OBOD is well on the way from the transition from Meso-Pagan to Neo-Pagan. They have several hundred members, I think.

MS: In the United States, or in Britain?

IB: Mostly in England, but they seem to have at least a few dozen in the United States, they have several local groves in the area, that we're going to be starting to list in DP and News from the Mother Grove. We just voted a policy, that I invented, called "a Forest Full of Groves" policy, whereby we will start publishing the central addresses, and local group addresses of the various and sundry other Druid groups that we get along with, which is most of them, by and large. Oh, that's right, I forgot yet another Druid group that was a schism from ADF, because I repressed the memory. Well, it wasn't a schism so much as it was a rip-off, something called the Divine Circle of Sacred Grove: A Druid Fellowship.

MS: They're an offshoot of Barney, aren't they?

IB: Originally they're from Barney. Their leader joined ADF, claiming to have absolutely no background in Druidism what-so-ever, and then preceded to plagiarize our materials, to mix it in with the stuff she had plagiarized from several other people. We were responsible for exposing them as being fraudulent, and essentially drove them out of town, in the Seattle area, and they've now moved to the Arizona area,

and we're keeping in touch with law enforcement people there. They are not nice. In any event, other Druid groups around. Well, there's the RDNA, and it's offshoots. some of them Meso-Pagan, some of them Neo-Pagan, many of them in transition. There's ADF. There's Keltria. Druidactios, if it still exists and functions, is Meso- not Neo- and not interested in being Neo-. Tom Cross is furious that ADF is so "Wicced" as he puts it, even though I've done my best to make sure that what we're doing actually bears very little resemblance to Wicca. But, for some strange reason he's decided that we're Wiccan, and he's agin it. And he's against Neo-Paganism. So, Druidactios is, would be on the Meso-line. There's a whole bunch of groups in England, that we're in contact with,

MS: They're not really pertinent right now.

IB: They're not really pertinent, because they're not really functioning in the United States. I'm unaware of any other Druid Groups in the United States. I'm sure there are some. Oh yeah, there's a, another schism. <laughs> What do they call themselves? The group in Portland. The transsexual people, Yeah. One guy in Portland was a member and was starting a grove to send his spin off and start his own Celtic church or something. Primitive Celtic Church, that's it.

MS: Primitive Celtic Church.

IB: Right. And, their rituals are pretty much identical to standard ADF rituals, and the theology is pretty much the same, as near as I can tell, the only difference is that they're independent. So they're Neo-. Primitive Celtic Church. They exist, far as I know, only in the Portland area. Every once in a while I'll hear about groups being Druid here and there, but when I contact them, I either don't hear from them or it's a group that somebody has just started and they don't know what they're doing and they join ADF. At this point, I have to say that ADF is probably the most influential of current Neo-Pagan Druid groups in America. Closely followed by Keltria. Do you know about Cindy Salee NRDNA grove up in Seattle?

MS: I tried contacting them, and just didn't get anything.

IB: Well, they're not organized in any sense, other than it's just the grove that she's been running for twenty years. Oh right Jay Tibbles. Jay Tibbles was one of the board members of the Divine Circle Group, when we exposed them, and he schismed off from them, and joined ADF. He's also joined the OBOD. He started his own group called the American Druidic Church. You'll be getting these addresses in the mail, I put them in the mail to you yesterday. Yeah, Jay Tibbles, the American Druidic Church. Very nice guy, he's an MD. And, they're essentially doing something that is Wicca essentially, with a strong Celtic focus.

MS: Alright, let try to get back over to the topic.

IB: I'm sorry.

MS: No problem, this is all good information.

IB: I was known as being scattered, absentminded, and having a terrible memory before.... I came down with a neurological disease.

MS: Do you see any similarities between RDNA, NRDNA, ADF, and Keltria, that makes them distinct from any other American Druid group?

IB: Rephrase that question.

MS: Do the aforementioned groups bear a closer resemblance to each other than to other groups?

IB: Well, obviously the NRDNA bears a closer resemblance to the RDNA than to anything else. ADF and Keltria bear a very close relationship to each other. And, historically, we're all linked in a chronological line. The NRDNA grew out of my efforts to convince the RDNA to get rid of the Meso and go for Neo. ADF was in many ways a result of my attempts, of my seizing attempts to do that within the RDNA structure, and just starting up something independent. And Keltria was an offshoot of a group of people inside ADF who wanted to take it in a slightly different direction.

MS: I guess that's good enough.

IB: As far as I'm concerned, all of these, we will cheerfully publish networking information for all of these groups, as well as the groups in the British Council of Druid Orders, and so on and so forth, all the groups that are legit. Whether we agree with their theology or not. If we think that they are, how would I put this? If we think that a group is positively inclined towards helping the environment, and is nature oriented, and upholding what they think of as the highest ideals of Druidism, then we would be inclined to be happy about networking with them, and helping people get in touch with them. I mean, some of the groups just, you know, I have no interest in. There's a cabbalistic group... Cabalistic Druidism, that doesn't make any sense to me. But they like it, so if we have people who come to us who are interested in Druidism, and are also interested in cabbala, I would send them off to that group.

MS: Well, see I wasn't trying to imply that we are the only four groups in the United States, which is not true.

IB: No, but they're the four groups that a) I'm most familiar with, b) that I've played a historical role in, and c) that I can chronologically and evolutionarily link one to the other.

MS: I think we've already gone over what books... Have we gone over what books deal with American Druidism?

IB: There aren't any.

MS: There aren't any, ok, that's right.

IB: The best source to deal with it is Margot Adler's [Drawing Down the Moon](#), Rosemary Guiley's [Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft](#) has a long article on ADF

MS: And you.

IB: and me, based on interviews with me that are pretty darn accurate, and that's about it.

MS: OK.

IB: Maybe Gordie has published something somewhere that I don't know about.

MS: There's a few I'll give a copies to you someday.

IB: Oh yeah, Laurie Cabot's book has been talking about me too.

MS: Who's Laurie Cabot?

IB: Laurie Cabot is the official witch of Salem Massachusetts, and she just put out a book called [Power Through Witchcraft](#). And, apparently, she's been mentioning us and recommending us, because we've been getting a lot of people saying, "I heard about you from Laurie Cabot's book, so what the heck." I have no idea how accurate her commentary would be about me. I haven't read it yet, I'm going to.

MS: So you've already mentioned that you share and exchange information with a variety of Druid groups. This is different from Keltria, which does not. I've heard the figure that 35% of ADF members come from [Drawing Down the Moon](#) article.

IB: Um, not anymore.

MS: Not anymore?

IB: I'd say that that was certainly true in the first seven or eight years. One of the things that has made ADF such a challenge to organize and to coordinate has been that we made the leap to a national organization at the start, we decided that we were going to function that way, as a national network for people who wanted to reconstruct Druidism in a way that we thought was focused on excellence rather than romanticism. So we have had lots of people communicating with each other at great distances, mostly through the mail, and a lot of people who heard about us primarily through Margot's book, and then joined the organization, and either stayed or didn't stay. This is different from the average organization, which starts out with a small local group of enthusiasts, and gradually gets larger and produces off shoots. So, it's had both strengths and weaknesses to the approach that we used.

MS: What are the main attractions of members now? How do most members come to find ADF?

IB: A multiple number of sources. The 1-800-Druidry line, that has been mentioned in various articles, has generated a lot of phone calls, and a lot of those people have become members as a result. The computer bulletin boards are attracting a lot of people since we have an ADF discussion group in the PODS net echo system. Are you familiar with that?

MS: Not yet.

IB: Pods is Pagan Occult Discussion System, or something like that. It's one of the FIDO net echo systems around the country, small local bulletin boards that use a tree structure to pass messages back and forth. Very informal. It's not a structure, it's a..... bulletin board organizing system paradigm that programmers use in common. In any event, so there's one of the many FIDO nets is the Pagan collection of FIDO nets. Bulletin boards passing Pagan messages around, and ADF is one of the discussion areas. There is also an ADF discussion area in Genie, there's one on the internet. And we also have people discussing ADF on all of the other main computer systems, like America online, and CompuServe, prodigy and so forth. So our name is certainly bandied about a great deal. And we've uploaded basic ADF literature with our address and with our phone number, so we get a lot of new members that way. And a lot of the new members are people who simply start going to a local grove, and attending. One of the biggest challenges we have right now is figuring out ways to persuade people that they should not just enjoy the fellowship of the local group, but actually join the organization and support the work that we're trying to do that requires money.

MS: You might want to take a look at the SCA, they're going through that problem right now.

IB: I'm not surprised.

MS: Yeah. OK.. and you also do presentations at conventions and such.

IB: Well, I.. yeah I go to festivals and things, not as many as I used to, because my health hasn't been good, but a lot... in the early days, a lot of the early growth of ADF came specifically as a result of presentations that I would do. I would go to a festival in some part of the country, talk about Druidism, talk about ADF, talk about what I'd like to do with it, a dozen people would join ADF, and the next thing we know we'd have two or three local groves. And, therefore, the majority of our groves wound up being in areas that I traveled to, which was mostly the east coast and the upper Midwest. That still has a strong effect on founding local groups. But, since

I'm not traveling as much as I used to, it's not as effective a method. There's also the fact that having had a kid, I've had to focus a lot more attention on staying home and earning a living, which I have never been able to do from being Arch-Druid, and that means that I'm spending a lot less time on promoting the organization and increasing its growth than I would like to be spending.

MS: You mentioned a Parliament of World Religions, is ADF part of any other interfaith councils?

IB: Not currently. It hasn't been relevant yet, simply because <pause> there aren't that many national ecumenical organizations. Local groves, are allowed to join local interfaith councils, but most local interfaith councils don't want Pagan groups, so that will vary considerably depending on what the local politics happen to be. I went... One of our members in ADF donated the money for me to go to the World Parliament of Religions, and so I went last September, and you probably read the results in the DP. the Druids Progress, or News from the Mother Grove, have you gotten that.

MS: I don't get News from the Mother Grove yet.

IB: Ah, I will try to send you some of those. It was a lot of fun, I learned quite a bit, and Paganism made quite a coming out party there.

MS: I heard about that.

IB Yeah.

MS: There was also Circle and wasn't Church of All Worlds there also.

IB: Yeah, and the Earth Spirit Community from Boston, which started out local became regional, and now is becoming a national organization.

MS: Do you see this to increase in the future?

IB: What? Ecumenical activity? Yeah, I think it's going to. Because the liberal members of the other mainstream religions are very very interested in Goddess worship, and in nature religion. And, they're perfectly willing to talk to us. So, even though the fundamentalists and the Greek orthodox and the Roman Catholics aren't to thrilled about us being around, the mainline Protestant and Unitarian and liberal Christian groups are very happy to sit down and have a cup of tea and find out what it is we really believe before they start arguing. I expect that there will be a lot of increasing interfaith activity between Neo-Pagans and non-Pagans in the future.

MS; I want to get a little more, I got like two more questions, here. Now as far as I've been able to pick up, the ADF is extremely well known for its pushing forward paid clergy, and obtaining church status. What were the other movements that were occurring at the same time you were doing this? For that paid clergy status and stuff? Were you alone, or were you among many people?

IB: Well, I told you about the ten year gap, didn't I?

MS: Yes I've heard of it.

IB: OK. About five or six years ago, I started talking about the need for professionally trained clergy in the Pagan community. That as Paganism became more mainstream, and as Pagan congregations became larger and larger, we were going to need a pool of clergy who were at least as well trained as the clergy of other religions are. And that meant that we needed to start having standards of qualification for clergy, based on demonstrable knowledge and skill. That in turn was

eventually going to lead to people having to go to college or in some other way get an education related to how to be a clergy person. This tied into ADF study program, which I believe I sent you a copy of.

MS: I've read it.

IB: I believe that we are eventually going to have a full time paid Pagan clergy. We have full time Pagan clergy now. It's just that hardly any of them get paid. Some of them do, some of them are actually starting to be paid by their religious organizations for these fifty and sixty hour work weeks they put in. I believe Otter and Morning Glory now get a stipend for the work that they do. And, Anders and Deirdre Corbin from Earth Spirit. Officially they earn their living organizing Pagan festivals, unofficially they're basically being paid Pagan clergy. The topic was extremely controversial when I first brought it up, for a variety of reasons, both legitimate and illegitimate. And, I think that we are going to see paid Pagan clergy increasing, and twenty or thirty years from now, there'll be so many Pagan clergy who are paid that every one will wonder what all the controversy was about. Not that this is going to solve all our problems, since there are plenty of clergy who get paid who still have problems. But, it will relieve one set of stresses from the heads of those of us who put in incredibly long hours trying to organize and facilitate large scale Pagan groups, and then have to turn around and earn a mundane living. The main argument on that will be in the last two issues of Fireheart Magazine, if you can get them.

MS: OK, I don't know if I'll get a chance on that. What is the official church position, according to law, right now, of the ADF.

IB: The official legal status of ADF? We're an incorporated nonprofit religious corporation in the state of Delaware, and we have 501c3 status from the IRS, they think we're a church, or they think we're a religious organization, they don't necessarily call it a church. And, so we're completely legal. And, we are working on obtaining what is called a Group-Exemption letter for our local groves. But, the IRS requires us to pay a fee of five hundred dollars for that, and we haven't accumulated sufficient money to pay for it yet, but eventually, each and every single chartered grove of ADF will also have a tax exempt status.

MS: Are your priests considered to be legal ministers?

IB: By whom?

MS: I don't know, by the courts? For instance if someone confided something to one of your priests, would he be forced to divulge that information in a legal court? Or has this not come up yet?

IB: It simply has not come up yet. Our people have performed weddings and funerals. Several of our people are functioning as Chaplains, not in the Military, but we have a prison ministry operating out of the grove in Texas. And, we haven't had any trouble at all with legal recognition of our status. Over the course of the last twenty years, due primarily to the mischievous going-ons of the Universal Life Church, most state and local governments have backed away from trying to define who's a real clergy person, and what is a real religion. Mostly these days, they examine things on a case by case basis. And, if you have an unusual non-mainstream religious group then a local county court house, or state government may want to see materials about your organization, before they'll say, "OK, we'll let you marry and bury here." But, so far that really hasn't been a problem here.

MS: The last two questions are activism, and differences between Druidism and Wicca.

IB: Ok.

MS: Which one do you want to go for?

IB: You've got my discussion of the differences in the... between Druidism and Wicca... in the little brochures. The standard ADF brochures, I mean, they're not that major, in one sense. I mean, Druidism and Wicca are Neo-Pagan religions, as we practice them anyway. <pause> Neo-Pagan Druidism and Neo-Pagan Wicca are similar in that they are both part of the Neo-Pagan community. They're sibling religions, with overlapping memberships. I would say that at least a third and maybe a half of the members of ADF also practice one form or another of Wiccan. There's no real conflict between the two, but there is a different emphasis in theology, a different liturgical style. And, primarily the difference is between groups that are small, private and exclusive versus groups that are large, public and inclusive. but, there's no reason you can't do both simultaneously. That is to say, you can have a large Pagan congregation that has smaller groups within it. That's what we're seeing develop in the ADF Groves, just as I expected.

MS: The major theological difference is Polytheism versus Pantheism?

IB: No, Polytheism vs. Duotheism. Wicca's basic theology is Duotheistic, or in the case of some feminist traditions, Monotheistic. ADF's emphasis is Polytheistic. We think it's more important to honor and celebrate the differences in diversity of deity, rather than the similarities they might have with each other. So, the advantage is that we don't have to cram all the deities into a small set of symbolic pigeon holes. Not every goddess in the world fits into the Mother, Maiden or Crone trilogy. Not every god in the world fits into the Hunting God, Vegetation God, Sun God pattern. So, we have a lot more theological elbow room in that way. My wife is a Witch and a Druid, I'm a Witch and a Druid. I just spent most of my time, and my emphasis in public on the Druidic side, because that's the side that needs work in developing right now. The Wiccan community is doing very nicely, and growing geometrically in a very quiet fashion.

MS: Last question here is activism. Does your group, as a group ...

IB: We encourage our members, and our local groves to be active in areas that are relevant where they happen to live. In ecology, social justice, and so forth. We don't have one or two particular axes that we grind. A couple... several groves are doing tree planting activities for example. We've had litter clean ups, and recycling days, and one group volunteered at a soup kitchen for a weekend, blood drives, basically we want... I think that Pagan congregations, at least the public church ones, should be an integral part of their local, social as well as biological, environment. And, that means participating in the life of the community, giving something back for what you get. I also believe that Druids are the natural chaplains for an environmental movement. And, that people who think of themselves as being Druidic in nature, so to speak, should be involved in some sort of environmental activism, even if its just a matter of joining Green Peace and subscribing to Nature Magazine, they should be putting some of their time, money, and energy into helping the environment.

MS: Alright, well I think I'm going to close off this interview officially, lets see here.

Alice Cascorbi Interview

August 29th, 1993

Alice restarted the Carleton Druids in 1985 and was quiet influential in giving it a new face for the times, new customs with her friends, and breathing new life into the system.



Eric Hillemann (EH): This is Eric Hillemann, the Archivist at Carleton, the date is August 29th, 1993. What follows will be an interview with Alice Cascorbi, Carleton class of 1988. Also Sitting with us is Michael Scharding, the current Arch-Druid of the Carleton Druids and the Druids are expected to form what we are going to talk about today and what the Druids were like when you were here, but lets start out with some information about your own background and what brought you to Carleton. Get us to the campus...

Alice Cascorbi (AC): ok, I was raised in Cleveland Ohio and I went to a preppy private school for my high school and when it came time to look for a college, which all of were expected to do. I didn't know, what I wanted to be and I found out that liberal arts college would be a place for a person like me. We had a good guidance councilor who first pointed in this direction, but it was really a friend of mine, Frankie Bressman who was one class ahead of me, at that school, Laurel school in Ohio, who came here herself. She was class of 86 I guess, who, when I asked her where you going to school, oh she said, "oh Carleton in Northfield." I said, "Well, I guess I heard of that. It was a good school without the pretensions of some of the eastern schools, my hold cohort was being shoved toward. I had had too much and too much of the preppiness and pretension and so when I visited here, the thing that really decided me, I had looked at Oberlin which was quite close to home and Haverford, and Swarthmore, at U of Chicago and Vassar and of the two, I almost when to U of Chicago, but Carleton with its small town atmosphere. I never had been in a safe environment where people could really walk around at night. Even though it is not perfectly safe here, its a lot safer that what I grew up with. The unpretentiousness and yet intellectual, I don't know

what the high intellectual level without pretentiousness and the way people seemed to interact when they walked around campus. I liked the atmosphere here it was relaxed and because it had a good reputation academically, that is all I knew about colleges. I came here. I choose Carleton, well for myself, I really blossomed here and I had a good time, a good experience. It was a life changing experience for me. The Druids are only a very small part of that. I didn't really know what I was doing, as a high school kid. This was a very good place to go and if I could choose again, I would choose a college like this.

EH: That is good to hear.

AC: Anyway, my religious background, which would be some interest to this is pretty typical intellectual semi-agnostic atheist parents. My mother raised Catholic. My father raised Lutheran. My father came from Germany. My mother came from Pennsylvania from a long line of people who been in this country a long time. So I have that in my background, for what it is worth, but neither of them was terribly religious. When their children were going up and we moved to Ohio, there was an Anglican church, Episcopal church just down the road. They considered it a great compromise between Catholicism and Lutheranism and so close to home too and we would go there. It was a friendly place, but we didn't have a community there and they were not into it religiously. I think if my parents had been more religious it would have been harder for me to accept what I did and what I have about my spiritual side. I was brought up with this sort of "religion is for kids." It is something we tell the children. It is, looking back, it is the Easter bunny. The parents didn't really believe it. The didn't really believe the teachings of their church. If my parents have spiritual, they do actually, their spiritual beliefs are a lot closer to mine, than to any Christian churches right now and so they are sort of Unitarian Agnostic people who have nothing against odd practice. They don't believe in the devil, they don't believe in, you know, a strong theology of that kind. I'm only getting to this because I'm not a very rebellious person by nature and if they had been, I probably would never have come out of the closet as a Druid. That is just my personality and unlike some of the other folks who hopefully are being interviewed too, I personally have always had a conflict between my desire to do Druid things and my desire to be a good girl and stay in the mainstream. I only put that out, because there are those of us too who are just drawn to it from an internal thing and have trouble with the flamboyant side. Some people really enjoy bucking the system and really had people like that when I was a Druid who were into it because it was cool and weird. There is certainly a place for that, but it is not where I'm coming from.

To make a longer story short, I had read a lot as a child. I read Greek mythology voraciously. I loved Greek mythology and by the time I was 6th or 7th grade age, I had realized that my parents didn't really believe the stuff in church, but they were acting as those they did only in front of the kids, you know. Don't swear sort of things. Sort of superficial lip service to Christianity. It made me really angry and when one of my little classmates said she was an atheist and that meant she didn't believe in god. I said, "Well that is what I am." Oddly enough, or at the same time, I had what I called my mystical streak. I just gave up try to analysis it because even at that time, there was times when I needed to pray or wanted to pray. Wanted to reach out and give thanks or give for help with something. I was 11 or 12 at this time. When I did that I reached out to Diana. The Goddess image that I knew from

mythology and to Athena, but especially to Diana because I was a maiden, I was a young girl with tom boy tendencies and was quite unhappy where I was with my school. The maiden huntress image, was very attractive and comforting. Diana was my goddess, even though I was an Atheist. That is sort of where things stood. I came to College, I was 17. I had been skipped ahead a grade and that was a bad experience that I wouldn't do to a kid like myself at that point, but be that as it may. So intellectually up there, emotionally young, very young. Coming to college was the best thing that happened to me in terms of here I finally had, there were people all around me who were like me who had been smart, who had been weird and had often been ostracized because they were smart and or weird. I loved it, it was wonderful. To open parts of myself, be friends, having good friends. Living with other people all around me, having a roommate. It was tremendously hard especially the first term here, freshman year, but it was tremendously rewarding. For a couple of years, I was just being a student here. I went to Quaker meeting a couple of times. I was interested in their philosophy, but didn't find any real juice in it. I had heard of the Druids in the Carleton Catalogue that this was something that had started back in the '60s. It seemed awfully attractive. No, there weren't any on campus any more, it was something in the past, but what a cool idea, how funny. The amusing, the prankish nature of it to buck the chapel requirement in that way was funny and then somebody took me up to the Hill of 3 Oaks and said this is where they use to meet. That really appealed to my romantic side. God this is great, this hill, these beautiful twisty Oaks, this old stone. This is great. It was just a little part of the background of the school. It was just one of the little legends you here. I didn't. I always very, up until then, had been very private with my spiritual beliefs or spiritual side and very comfortable that way, only comfortable really by myself. Somebody, when I was a freshman, I lived on 4th Musser (Mec snickers)... shut up Mike. I know, I know, that considered one of the worse dormitories on campus and still is. Yeah, coming from Cleveland I was used to that.

EH: Cleveland prepares you for 4th Musser?

AC: That's right, yeah. So anyway, anyway my roommate was Rachel Leader. Done the hall was a woman named Judith Norman who was another freshman. We had a good forum, Judith and Rachel became two of my best friends. Two other people on the floor were Meg Ross who was a junior art major at that point. She had a single, which is probably the reason she was there, in Musser. Another freshman named Maggie Daggit and Maggie was a very frail women with a lot of problems. I think she was drug dependant. Anyway, many different people and I liked all of them. At some point in the fall of '83, Meg came up to us, me and Judith and said, "had we heard of the Druids?" I said, "Yeah" and she said she was a Druid and she one of the last ones left on campus and a guy, whose name many always forget and still forget who is probably David Frankel, right? Somebody who had graduated a few years earlier was the last Carleton Druid and he had inducted Meg into as a Druid, he was back on campus visiting that night and wanted to induct some more Druids if anyone was interested. Meg, asked Judith and me, would you like to become Druids? We said, "yeah, sure, that sounds like fun, what do we have to do?" she said grab your coat, come out to the Hill of Three Oaks (TM). Maggie was there was too and we told Maggie what we doing and asked if she wanted to come and so we all paraded out to the Hill of Three Oaks (TM). Meg had this big green chalice. One of these really ugly glass things that I guess.

MS: Maybe the deep glass chalice.

AC: No, there was 3 or 4 of them kicking around at different times at the Farm House arena, but this one was one big ugly green glass chalice that was probably from Ben Franklin store. Meg had that and somebody had a bottle of spirits of some kind mixed very thoroughly with water. This guy, who ever he was, was staying in Goodhue and we met him at Goodhue and he wore his bathrobe. He had clothes on, but had his bathrobe over as his ritual robe or something. Judith brought her stuffed tiger who is like a mascot. She stills has it and Maggie and I. We tripped up to the hill and the guy, these people know his name...

MS: No, I don't.

AC: Yes you do, never mind. He and Meg, I think we let a fire. We did, they did the blessing of the waters. I guess it was the winter season, so we did the waters of sleep blessing and then they told us the tradition was to become a first level Druid, you just had to say you wanted to, to participate in the waters thing and agree that you wish to be a Druid. He told us that there two things, two tenets of Druidism that we were swearing ourselves two. I found it pretty easy to swear to and they were reverence for nature and respect for all religious paths, respect for other religions. No problem, for me. So we, to use the Druid prevalence, we were sealed to service of the Earth Mother and I related this to my Greek spirituality thing and to my ancestral feelings. You know, that my ancestors are from Europe and this once was their religion. That whatever little bit was left, was left a harking back to that, to something out of my own people, way back and I was delighted. It was mostly for fun and the guy who ever he was, not to take it too seriously that some people in the past had taken this Druid thing really seriously and he didn't think that was a good idea. All the same, to consider ourselves Carleton Druids now. The made the circle. They made the water blessing and then he and Meg both dipped their fingers in the water and they made the circle with the two lines on our foreheads, all of our forehead, it was myself, Judith Norman and Maggie Daggit and Judith's Tiger also received the symbol his forehead. (general laughter) He has never attended another ceremony as far as I know. That was the beginning and the end of my Druid activity for 2 more years.

The next thing in line was, well I had taken a year off. I went through my freshman and sophomore years and decided I wanted to take some time off and so the school year 85-86 I was not enrolled at Carleton and I subsequently take back. I was in Northfield for a portion of that time beginning January 1986 and I was working downtown and living in town. So I still had contact with friends who were at Carleton and I would go visit them sometimes and stuff. Let me make sure I get everything right here, chronologically. There were some other students who were older than I was, who were interested modern Earth spirituality or modern Paganism. One of them I know was Tino Thompson and I think what had happened, the summer before, that is the summer of '85, some students had gone to the Pagan spirit gathering. No, I could be wrong about this. No, never mind, scratch that. Tino was interested in Pagan stuff and some other people were too. They, I wasn't part of that, invited a woman named Selena Fox to come here and speak. It must of happened sometime in early '86, because that is when I was back in town. I went to that lecture, I got an invite from someone I knew. She was a wonderful speaker. She gave a lecture on modern Paganism, modern Wicca. She's a Wiccan, you might say she is a witch and a shamanic practitioner. She talked about the Druids and their part in that small spiritual movement.

MS: She talked about the Carleton Druids?

AC: She did not as far as I remember directly. She talked about the spectrum of beliefs represented in modern Paganism and showed some slides the Pagan spirit gathering, that her group Circle Sanctuary puts on every year. Among them, well there are lots of many kinds of Pagans and there are the Druids. She described them as the Catholics among the Pagans. This was Isaac Bonewit's group. She had slides of Isaac and his group, some of followers at PSG under their Druid flag. I'm sure during the question and answer period somebody said something about Carleton Druids, but the main memory I have of that lecture, a wonderful introduction to people who are out there. There are people seriously worshipping Diana and saying they were, and not keeping it quiet and treating it and insisting they be treated as legitimate religious practitioner which was a new thing for me. As I said, she was an engaging lecture, she is a good teacher and she invited questions.

She talked about Satanism and that was not part of the Earth spirituality thing. It was a Christianity heresy thing. She likened the Satanist use of the pentacle to their use of the cross. In both cases they turn it upside down. I associated the pentacle with icky things and heavy metal music at best. I remember asking her well, who are these Satanists who go out and turn your pentacle upside down. She answered, in her experience, they were people who really lacked power, who were needing power in a big way. She is a psychologist. It was almost an psychological assessment who they might be. This was still freaky and you know the word witch was and to still is not a nice word in a lot of people's ears and certainly in mine. Oh, maiden mother and crow, Diana's maiden. Hmmm, interesting, I might be a witch, but no no no, I worship Diana. When it was over, there was a dinner for them, potluck held out at Farm house where Tino might have been living at the time. Anyway he was associated with people there, if he didn't live there. Selena and her husband Dennis were hanging out after dinner there and I went over there. I think I didn't eat dinner there, but I got there later with my boyfriend at the time, Hideo Yamada who kind of hid behind the paper and read the sports page. He came with me, but he thought it all too freaky, but that is a funny story in itself, but, he just converted to Catholicism and now he was gung ho about religion himself. We're not still going out, but we're friends. Religion was not something he wanted to touch, especially goofy religion. Selena was there. Dennis was there. I and several other folks.

Someone then brought up the Carleton Druids, we have this home ground Pagan movement here at Carleton and the ancestors of Isaac's group started here and Selena hadn't known that or she said, "That is amazing. Are there any still around?" and someone said "No, they died out." and she said, "that's too bad." I was there, and I said, "No, you know, I am a Druid, I was inducted several years ago, into the first level." And they were like "really, wow!" I guess people had said, "Its too bad we'd like to start it up again and we don't have any Druids of the old line." and they did, it was me and I didn't know it. Maybe a week later, we had a big induction ceremony, a lot of people had been sparked by this and had wanted to associate themselves with the Druids. I think Andrea Dawson, I don't know. Andrea Dawson was part of this with Jan Schlamp, both of them have changed their names now. Heiko Koester, Branden Shield, definitely him, Tino, although he wasn't a close friend of mine and I didn't do much religious practice

with him. It was early spring in 86. I guess we looked up the Druid Chronicles. Someone had dug up a copy that might have been out at Farm house and looked up some of the ceremony's and things and getting more and more into it. We put together a big first level induction and had 30 people attend. Among them were Clay Christianson, who works for security here. He had been a friend, as much as a staff member can be a friend to little freshies and everything. He was a cool guy. He was the only staff member who I know of who has become a Druid. About 30 people, about mixed equally men and women, many of them I never saw again at a ceremony, but they seemed consider themselves Druids. I remember, I hope Clay doesn't mind this, but one of things you ask the people when you symbol on their foreheads is "are you ready for this, are you ready to be sealed to the service of the Earth Mother? Do you understand what you're doing?" When I asked Clay the question he said, "I've been ready all my life, you know..." Certainly, like in my case, there were people who had been feelings these things or feeling their invested somewhere other than the Christian milieu in which most of us grew up, but not having a name for it or a place to put it and the Druids became that for me for awhile. After the first big induction, there was no big danger that the lion, so to speak, would die out again. I don't know how much time we have left on this side... I can go into what we did as Druids as I went into my junior year and my senior year.

EH: There is time left, go ahead.

AC: So this thing in the spring happened and the following summer of 86, I left town, I actually went to Japan for a short while. Jan Schlamp and Heiko Koester and I think somebody else like Paul Gover, maybe, but definitely Jan and Heiko went to the Pagan Spirit Gathering that Circle puts on. It is a big week long get together/camp out thing in a camp ground in Wisconsin out in the country. They went and when they came back they were even more fired up. Both of them are go-getters, do it people and had a lot of energy which I never had and they were both also a year ahead of me. The were both at least the class ahead of me. That following fall, the fall of 86, we got the Chaplain at the school who was Jewelnel Davis and she began something new called the council for religious understanding. This was to be a lunch time, once a week get together. My impression was she had envisioned the Catholics talking to the Protestants and everybody talking to Jews kind of thing. Pretty typical ecumenical table, but there would be a topic each week and people would speak about their religious paths, responses to that topic whether it be war or the question of evil or smaller things, the place of women, things like this. The idea was to get religions talking to each other as represented by their student members here at Carleton. Jan and Heiko petitioned that the Druids be allowed to come and sit on this council. Things are a little fuzzy, I don't remember how many rituals or what was going on, at that time we began, sort of, the ritual practice that continued till I left here and after. Jan and Heiko had been exposed to the sweat lodge practice at PSG. They brought sweat lodging to Carleton. I'm sure they ran the first couple and Jan especially was really into it. Heiko went out at some point and cut down some Willow saplings and they built a sweat lodge out of saplings in the lawn at Farm house and dug up blankets wherever people could dig them up and put them over the sweat lodge. I don't remember when I did my first sweat, but it was there...

...Was Andrea was the one who started the nudity thing? I said, "no, not that remember." We always did sweats naked, but associated with some of the Pagan people was being a Nudist or going Naked in Farm House.

MS: Clothing optional house.

AC: Clothing optional house it became for awhile, but actually that was a little bit later and I really think Brandon Shield was the most into that. I should say, by this time, yeah the fall of 86, Brandon and I had started a relationship which was sort stormy and since has really got awful and I don't talk to him any more. I hope people don't judge me too awfully for that, but its like one of those college things. He was awfully attractive to me and I spent a lot time trying to get him to be to my boyfriend and a lot of that time happened while the Druid stuff has happening and inevitably some of that plays out. I only mention that for the sake of completeness, yes it is true. Heiko was going out with Jan at some point during this too. So we had couples forming among the Druids. Other folks since have told me like Nat Case who when I lived at Farm house my senior year, the year 87-88. He lived there too. After we both graduated, he let me know, that he considered himself a Pagan also, but never have felt good about coming to Pagan rituals, because he didn't really like Branden. Our leadership, I've seen this in other contexts, people who might have been interested in what we doing, might not have been socially interested in us or whatever and so because this is such a little college and people know each other very well often, the personal and the political get very intertwined. They certainly did for me, but let me try to pick up the thread of the narrative a little bit better.

Back in the fall of '86, I was a junior and I was living with Judith and Rachel, my good friends from freshman times in Nourse, second Nourse, Nourse 200. We were doing Druid rituals and I was trying to get through Organic Chemistry. Jan and Heiko were sitting on the council for religious understanding. There was a debate, the beginning of a series of debates around the Druids and around the legitimacy of the Druids, because here is a goofy out of the ground mushroom religion that the kids are doing. They decided we weren't a cult, which is good. A cult, not occult. No Guru not leading us down the wrong path, it was self-delusion if that, and that was ok. Many of the people on the council for religious understanding was quite wary of the idea of a non-Christian spiritual group claiming to be Druid and having meetings under the moon and probably naked sometimes and they were right. All this stuff. I recall reading, I think in the 'Tonian, something about this debate, Druids trying to get into the council for religious understanding and that the council had brought up the question, "well the Druids want in, what if some Satanist came and wanted in? Would we have to let them in?" And that essentially they decided, that they would, if they wanted to be there. It was Heiko and Jan who did it. They went to those meetings. That was very typical, certainly of Heiko, he's kind of that activist personality. I applauded what they were doing. At the same time it really scared me. I didn't want anything to do with it at that point. It wasn't my stick or so I thought. Meanwhile in our company, among our own company, we had some sweat Lodges, mostly on the Farm house Lawn. I recall Paul Gover becoming involved, another guy Paul, Michelle.

MS: Gretchen

AC: Well, Paul Gretch is Paul Grover. Paul Gover was called Gretch because he and another Paul lived at Farm house at the same time, and in one of those precious little traditions, that was really kind of funny, they... Years before they had 2 women living there who had the same name of Laura, I think They decided the younger of the two, should have a different name to avoid confusion. And her middle name was Gretchen. And so, they got Laura and Gretchen. And then the next time two people with the same name showed up, they decreed that the second of the two should be called Gretchen. And I think the third time two people with the same name showed up, it was Paul Grover and Paul...long tall Paul with long hair, who worked in computers, I don't remember his name...he went out with Michelle, and they almost got married. But he was older, and so Paul Grover was called Gretchen, or Gretch. And that name stuck with him.

Anyway, he was in big with the Druid things. Digby Willard came to one of our sweats, kind of late. We had a floating batch of people, and...I found the sweat lodge a very good practice, you know, I guess we're not even close to what the Native American people do in their sweats, but we would...it would be a big event, you know, an event that took time, anyway, and finding time away from studies was always part of the milieu of the Druids. And building the sweat lodge, which had to be rebuilt now and then, because they are fragile - just saplings tied together with sticks - finding enough old blankets to put over it, which wasn't as much of a problem at Farm House, because they had a huge collection up in the attic. Building a fire, getting some granite, or hard stone, heating up the stone. When everything...when the stone was good and hot, bringing it into the sweat lodge, and laying it down. Then the people would crowd in, and I think they told us you always enter going clockwise, which is in...certainly in the Wiccan tradition, circling clockwise is building up energy. And circling counter-clockwise is letting go energy, or drawing down energy. And some traditions are very strict about which way you do what, and we were told, yeah, go in the sweat lodge clockwise.

Piling in there...we would all be naked, you know, people had the option to wear bathing suits or stuff if they wanted to, but the five or seven of us who were sort of core members at this point were into being naked for sweat lodge. I related to it, again, partly because it was...I don't how to respond to it exactly, but I felt like I was in National Geographic, you know. It's like wow, you know, we have all these bodies of really different shapes, and it's okay to be naked for a little while, you know, all together, and not look at it, you know, as sexual, necessarily. Although some people did, I think (laughs). Never mind that. But, no, some people got more of a thrill out of just seeing their friends naked. And some people got more of a thrill out of being naked (laughs). Except when it was very cold, I kind of enjoyed it, you know, alternative stuff.

EH: You had a copy of the Druid Chronicles and things. Was there any feeling that you had used any of the rituals that were done by the early group, or did mostly concentrate on the sweat lodge?

AC: No, we did...I was just getting long-winded on the sweat lodge. We did certainly look through the chronicles, read through them, and look at the rituals that they had done, and re-enact according to their, you know, their formulas, or whatever. We tried having...I think we tried having new moon or full moon meetings each month on the Hill of Three Oaks for a while. And it worked for a while. All of these

things would always fall apart when, you know, finals time came around and stuff. And the cold weather, during a lot of the Carleton school year, kind of puts a damper on these things. So, often times, somebody would say...it would be informal, but Branden or Andrea or somebody might say, "oh, let's have a ritual tonight," or "Let's have a ritual next Saturday. And... okay, well, so-and-so is gonna tend the fire, and so-and-so said she'd get firewood." I'll go into that in a little bit more detail. Often these things would sort of fall apart, and the day of the ritual, the people would call up, and just say, "Oh, I'm working on a paper, and I can't do the fire like I said I could." Or, "Well, I can be there at nine, but not past ten." So, it was very...it was loose, and it was not...well, there was nobody to say, you know, you can't do that, because at Carleton studies come before everything else, and it was just one of those things. But oftentimes, you know, we'd hear with joy, oh, you know, seven or eight people have said they'd be here up on the hill at ten. And two people would show up. And so, that's the way the Druids' roulette worked when I was a Druid (laughs).

EH: Did you have leaders, officers? Was there an Archdruid? Was that title used?

AC: No. When I was there, that title was not.

EH: Were any titles used?

AC: No. We...Depending on our interests...Heiko, and I think Branden got very much into reading the Druid Chronicles, and Jan too. And some of the stuff...they would sort of bring me stuff, and I read some of it, but looking at the formulation of the Druid hierarchy, I think Branden and Heiko got into that, just looking at it. And they decided, and I agreed, that a lot of the sort of playing with, you know, fourth, fifth, sixth level, who was who and what was what, and having a bard, and an I don't know what all, you know, an officer in charge of this and that, just was not appealing to us. It was too hierarchical. None of wanted to be Archdruid. Certainly in the following year, some of us who had been in it longer were looked on as leaders, but it wasn't...it was neither a self-given nor a formally others-given title. It was more a hierarchy of age, like a lot of things are at college...What am I trying to say...? Branden and Heiko made the decision to do vigils. You know, we had a lot of first-level Druids. And I think one of them...I didn't do this myself, but one of them said something to me, like, "Well, you ought to be second-level," you know, "You must be second-level by now," because of what I had done, you know. And I'm like, "Oh, great." They decided they wanted to be third-level, and they...we accepted the idea that for third-level, which meant a more serious commitment to these things, you were to vigil on the Hill of Three Oaks, theoretically, or someplace, anyway...Stay up all night in the Arb and meditate, think about being a Druid. I know that one...I think the night Branden was going to vigil, it was a horribly cold, rainy night, and...I mean, it was about this time, it was...at the beginning he said August - this was October, we're actually in October today, and

Hmm?*

AC: Yeah, you did. But anyway - cold, almost snowing, rain, you know, right around Samhain, or Halloween time. And he decided that - or we all decided that vigiling at Farm House was quite acceptable instead (laughs), and so we had a ritual out on the Hill, and then came back in. And we would do the Waters of Life ceremony. That was a big part of any ritual we did. Other things that our rituals included were guided meditations...we did a little bit of the seasonal celebration, but somehow Samhain, or Halloween, always took big

precedence over the other holidays. I think partly because of Halloween, and partly because it occurred early enough in the year that people had energy still to put into it. And a couple of the really big Pagan holidays, or cycle holidays of the ancient Europeans, occur at really awful times for Carleton grads, (correcting) or for Carleton students in class to be doing things with. You know, the winter solstice is when we're all on vacation, and so is the summer solstice. Fall equinox...well, I don't know. We never did much with that. Beltane, May Day, which we should have been able to do a lot with, we never did, somehow. It was never as big a deal as Samhain. Maybe because of Mai Fete, and other things that the college already does around those...I don't know. But it came to me, I guess, the second year that...well, we have this big, you know, Samhain, and people went and dug up just a little bit of Celtic mythology, and I understand I'm not actually pronouncing it correctly, but we said "Sowan," even though we spelled it Samhain, and I didn't really understand why. Okay, that's the end of the year, that's the final...that's the finish of one yearly cycle. It was the day of the dead, where the ancestors could walk again, you know, and people would honor their ancestors, and their connections with those who had died. And we'd have a big shindig at that point, a big ritual on the Hill of Three Oaks, and then always there were Halloween parties to go to afterwards. And the Druids would, in my two years of being associated, they'd, you know, go right to the Farm House Halloween party and have a blast. But we didn't do the same thing on the happy holiday that balances that somber one, which is Beltane, with flowers, and fun, and everything.

Let's see...so yeah, we did...we looked into the old Druid things, but we were anarchistic. Jan and Heiko had learned these...the sweat lodge-type things, and I guess elements of Wicca that weren't really present in the early Druid things. I think the calling of the four directions, and the association of certain qualities with the four directions was not originally done by the old Druids at Carleton. But we would...because they taught us this invocation, we would invoke spirits of North, of South, of East, of West, usually going in a circle, usually North, East, South, West, North being Earth, East being Air, South being Fire, and West being Water. So we would cast a circle, we would ask them, these spirits, to be present. I remember a discussion with Heiko once, 'cause...(laughs), yeah, here we go. One of the Council of for Religious Understanding things was reported once, again, probably in the Carletonian, and they said, well, "a discussion of spirits was posed, and Heiko Koester said the Druids do not conjure up evil spirits, even though they certainly could." And I kind of...I didn't agree with that at all. Because essentially, I don't think they're there to be conjured. So we had some theological differences, you might say. And I talked to Heiko about that, and said, you know, "what do you mean by this?" And he said, "Well, when we invoke, you know, the spirits of North, the spirits of East, I feel they're really there." And Joseph Walzer, who was younger than us, was there with us, and he said something like, "But I think of those as spirits of mind." And I agree with that. So some of us, like Heiko, were truly into the reality of these things. And others of us were seeing them more as symbols. And I certainly fall more into the latter category. But we would invoke the directions, and cast a circle, you know, ask these spirits to be there with us, to protect us and bless us with whatever we were going to do.

We would then have the Waters of Life ceremony, the blessings of the water, which was usually in one of these big, ugly, green chalices from the chalice collection. And Heiko

had dug up several of them from somewhere, I think probably in the attic at Farm House they were stored - there's a lot of old dishware kicking around over there. Or there was, anyway. Waters of Life, which were usually totally non-alcoholic. I think the original recipe calls for some whiskey to be added during the summer half of the year, when they're the Waters of Life. And when they're the Waters of Sleep, that is, from Samhain to Beltane, you don't add any alcohol. But we hardly went out from Samhain to Beltane, anyway, and so it wasn't all that much of a big deal.

We would often dance. We did spiral dancing when we had enough people, and that's really fun. That's...you probably heard about that from other people. There was also...there was a lot of creativity, and we would switch off leadership, who was going to lead the ritual, or once in a while, somebody would come over and say...like Heiko and I might go to Andrea and say, we want to have a ritual to celebrate X and such, you know, the...I don't know what - the winter equinox, whatever - do you want to lead it? And then the person would agree or not, and so whoever was leading the ritual decided what we were going to do. It was always celebratory. Sometimes it also included a prayer, or what you might call a magic working, in that we would raise energy for some specific purpose. The energy was raised by dancing, by chanting...there were several chance which were...which came from PSG, and they're basic modern American Pagan chants that a lot of people know - "the Earth is our mother" is one of them, "Air I am, Fire I am, Water, Earth and Spirit I am," ...what else?

MS: Circles?

AC: "Circle around, we circle around." Those were some biggies that we also did in the sweat lodge. But what I'm trying to lead into is the freedom and the creativity that people brought to these little rituals. And they were little. We didn't have the time and we didn't have the energy to be truly making this a focus, at least most of us...If somebody feels that they were, it's news to me. You know, everybody had their schoolwork, and everybody had their friends, and their relationships, and their sports, and who knows what, you know, also going on, a lot going on. So we didn't have a lot of time to put into this. But...one of the early rituals that I remember, that was totally off-the-wall, was...Curtis Love and Andre Baskin were two guys who...they lived at Farm House that year. Andre was sort of a computer whiz, and kind of an anarchist. He did a few interesting pranks with the computers. Like he set up a vax terminal in one of the closets at Farm House, an illegal vax terminal, which was wonderful, because at that time, when personal computers were just beginning to come in, lot's of students wanted vax space to do papers, and the vax lab was incredibly crowded. And to live out there, and walk into campus, especially on a winter night, was a lot of trouble. And so, I don't know where he kyped the equipment from, but he stole some computer equipment...didn't really take it off campus, 'cause he just put it in a campus house, and got a modem hooked up, so that Farm House had a vax hook-up in its closet. Anyway, that was Andre. And Curtis was a really interesting person - goofy guy, friend of mine. We had bio classes together. And Curtis had a very active, child-like side to him. And he really loved his stuffed toys. And he had this toy lion, called Leo, I guess, just this...

MS: There was the dinosaur too.

AC: Yeah. I don't what all...I do remember Leo the lion clearly. In one of those little in-house things that I wasn't really privy to, because I wasn't living out there at that time, Leo got kidnapped, and it was a big deal. And I think it turned out

Andre had done it. And Curtis was putting notices in the NNB for the return of Leo, and, you know, talking about him as though he were truly alive. And somehow peace was made, and whatever factions had done this came together again, and there was to be a ritual sometime, I think, in the fall of '86, late fall, the return of...the reappearance of Leo the lion. And Curtis and Andre set the whole thing up. We did some folk dancing at that ritual. Andre was into folk dancing, so instead of the spiral dancing, we did some Irish jig-type stuff that he taught us, which was sort of fun. And he had a boom-box for music. That was always...the innovations of what to do up on the Hill for entertainment for the theatrics of rituals - music, lights, whatever you want. He had a boom-box, and I remember thinking, "well, that's not very primitive" (laughs). Sort of techno-Druid here. And Leo the lion appeared in a flash of black powder at some point. It was like...there weren't that many people there, there were maybe six or seven of us, and then Andre and Curtis, and Curtis stood up and said something like, "And now, the moment you've all been waiting for, we're going to ask the Earth mother if Leo could come back (laughs), and we really hope she'll grant our prayer." And they did something, and I think Andre threw some, you know, firecracker-type thing into the fire, and there was a big poof, and Leo reappeared, I think on the alter stone. And I remember Curtis picking him up and going, "Oooh, Leo, you're back" (laughs).

And I tell this to emphasize that a sense of fun, and a sense of humor about all this was very much a part of the Druid time that I remember. We could be seriously thinking about our relation to the Earth, and the spiritual nature of that, and at the same time having these sort of silly rituals. One of the things that I like about the Druid path, as laid down by the Carleton people in 1960's, whatever, was the beginning prayer, the apology that we actually didn't use much, but the spirit of it appealed to me, where they said, essentially, to the Christian God, you know, forgive us for doing these things, forgive for asking...you know, forgive us for offering these prayers and sacrifices. We know you don't need prayers and sacrifices. Forgive us these sins that are due to our human limitations, and the sins being offering to a specific God entity...to personifying God in a certain way, and to offering prayer, and to offering sacrifices, which I'll explain in a second. The implication being we know God is bigger than all this. And that's what I believe, that whatever we call God is much bigger, and much more inclusive than any human religion has ever captured. And part of the reason I think this is, if there is such a thing...I'm a scientist, I come from a science background. I believe evolution happened. I believe what they dig up archeologically is true, you know. So it seems that humans have been on the Earth at least several hundred thousand years in their modern form, and several million years, if you count hominid thingies, that probably had language capacity, and made tools too. So in all that time, there have been so many different ways of reaching out to the divine. And I thought then, and I still think, you know, organized religions are an attempt to get a handle on our place in the cosmos, but whatever's out there, if there is anything out there...it's been worshipped in a lot of different ways. And if it's as great as they say it is, you know, as it must be, the only thing that I can think that would differentiate good from bad is intention. So actually, I consider myself more of Unitarian now than anything else. I'm sort of a Pagan Agnostic Unitarian. I have sort of a radical vision of God in that way...that what we were doing was in no way evil or offensive. Which was not shared...this opinion was not shared by all of the campus Christian groups,

but I'll get to that in a second. We offered, as per the old Carleton Druid way, vegetable sacrifices. And everybody talked as though that was hilarious. The question of animal sacrifice runs through most people's minds when they think of Druid, or Pagan. And when we'd say, "No, no, we're the Reformed Druids, we offer only vegetable sacrifices," it would diffuse that tension in a big way. And we did. I mean, we thought about...our connection to the world that feeds us, essentially. Sometimes the sacrifices was Pine branches, I remember getting some from the Pines down near the hill. I was into harvest-type things, like food, you know, not just leaves that we wouldn't really eat, but corn, and squash, and things like that. So, on the occasion where we did, we would usually make

End of First Tape

EH: This is tape two of the interview with Alice Cascorbi on October 29, 1993.

AC: Okay, just to finish up about the vegetable sacrifices...yeah, we would normally leave them up on the Hill to be accepted by wild creatures. And sometimes someone would go back, like I'd go back a day later or something, to see if what we had left on the stone was still there. And if it was, I would throw it in the bushes somewhere. We always used the prayer in returning things, any such like dumping out things that we had to get rid off. "To thee we return this portion of thy bounty, O our mother, even as we must return to thee." This is a Druid prayer that I think is very beautiful, and you always use it when you're dumping the surplus Waters of Life onto the ground, returning to the Earth. And so, I guess, when I did that, with the vegetable sacrifices, I would certainly say that prayer as I threw the apple in the bushes, or whatever. It had always struck me as humorous that, in my reading of the old Greek practices, the Gods were said to be nourished by the stuff that the people didn't really want. Like they would sacrifice bullocks, as I understand it, and whatever else, but of food animals, the horns, or the...I'm sorry, the hide and the fat would be burned, and the scent of this wafting to Olympus was said to please and nourish the Gods. That's what the Gods got out of a sacrifice, and the humans got the meat. And I led one ritual, probably one of the better ones that I led, in the next year, in '87, and we had a fairly yummy selection of fruit, like some bananas, and stuff, and a large group of people - it may have been the first big ritual of the year, because we had a lot of freshmen interested in the Druids there at the time. And they included Heather Franek, and Heather Gruenberg, and several other younger people. God, what was that guy's name...?

MS: John Nolan(?)...Joe Banks?

AC: Yeah, John Nolan(?) was there. Joe Banks...he was...he wasn't a freshman then...But anyway, lots of new folks...yeah, people who subsequently got to be, I guess, leaders after my time was over, and after I was Carleton. But anyway, we had a large fruit selection, and I explained to the people that what we were going to do in this ritual that I was leading was offer the fruit, and, in the grand tradition of sacrifice, as I said, we were going to then eat it (laughs). So, you know, we would offer to the Earth Mother, but then it would for us to consume. And so, people liked that, they thought it was cute, whatever. And the skins and the cores went into the bushes. But I'm getting a little ahead of myself. Okay, the year '86-'87, it was academically my hardest year. I lot of core classes for my major at that point, which was biology. And had to really drag myself through organic chem, that was just hellish. But as Spring came, somebody asked me, I think it was Heiko, whether I would be willing to sit on the Council

of the...the Council for Religious Understanding the following year. And I know at first I said no way. I just said I wasn't interested, I didn't feel a need to discuss my beliefs. But somehow it turned out nobody else was going to do it, or they needed two people, and I think Jan was graduating...would that have been correct? Yeah, I think so. So Jan was leaving, and they needed somebody. And Andrea Dawson also graduated at that point. And Tino was out picture...Tino left, I don't know if he graduated or not, I just don't know. But he was gone. And so, for the following year, '87-'88, which was my senior year, I was one of the elder Druids on campus. And the other elder Druids included Heiko and Branden. Now, wait a minute...I'm wrong about Jan - well, I don't know. Don't take me too literally on all these dates, I'm not quite sure about those things.

EH: We can look up when Jan graduated.

AC: Yeah, okay. But anyway, for one reason or another, I ended up serving on the Council for Religious Understanding in my senior year, which was an interesting experience. That was also Dave Diehl first came in, I think he was a freshman that year.

MS: No beard.

AC: No beard (laughs). He's a character, he always has been. And I found later, somewhat later, that he and I are like third cousins. Yeah, it's kind of cool. Anyway, Dave...these two young women named Heather were very different - we called them Heather Light and Heather Dark, because Heather Franek had long, dark hair, and Heather Gruenberg was very blond, and...I don't know. Heather Gruenberg was a very interesting person, and it was the first...I liked Heather Franek a lot, she became a friend of mine. But Heather Gruenberg was one of the folks who was totally enthralled with the weirdness of it all. This is almost more personal than Druid stuff, but Tino Thompson came back to Carleton that Fall for a short time. He stayed maybe a week or two. And he was kind of living in his van, and kind of traveling around. He came back here...I don't really remember why, but he stayed at Farm House, which was nothing unusual, you know, folks who had been associated with that house, or with people who were in the house always had a welcome, you know, to come and stay over a while. And he and Heather took up with each other (laughs), and it led to a couple of...it led to one very serious situation, which I'll get into, but she was totally enthralled. She was from Michigan, and from a...I guess a kind of conservative small town, and dove right in. And the Druidism was just like the Doctor Who club, and the watching Star Trek, you know, which are also things I love doing, but the sort of just complete immersion in it I don't do. I had some problem with the whole attitude. I said some things I wasn't terribly proud of later. I had, for the first time in my life, the annoying sensation of people expecting me to help them find their spiritual self. And I had always been really solitary. Like I say, I'm not proud of this, and I certainly hope I get better at it as I get older, but...One time I was up on the Hill of Three Oaks, and it was daytime, it was a beautiful Fall day. And I don't remember why I was going up there, but Heather Gruenberg was there, and she was lying on top of the alter stone, kind of belly-down, I guess. And when I got up to the top of the Hill, she looked up at me with this sort of puppy dog expression. She said, "(affects a little girl voice) I've been lying here for the past hour trying to communicate with this rock, and I haven't been getting anything." And it really annoyed me, and I looked at her, and I said, "It's just a rock" (laughs). Oh, Alice, you're so mean, you're so awful. I really am not good with...this is not true

confessions tape, but this is what would go on. Tino was really flamboyant, and they started going out, dating or whatever, and she would go around telling everybody that would listen that her new boyfriend was a bisexual witch. And she was really loud about it, you know, like...I think she lived in Goodhue...just giddy, totally giddy with this new freedom. She told everybody at home, at her place back in Michigan. And, sometime in Fall term that year, the whether was still very summer-like, I got this...Farm House got this phone call, and it was from Dean Jean Phillips...and let me make sure I get everything right here...Okay, Dean Jean had been contacted by a man who turned out to be Heather's old hometown boyfriend, who was younger than she was and was still in high school. And he, having heard about the Druid thing, and about Tino, and being obviously slightly unstable, and extremely jealous - he wanted Heather to marry him, is what I heard from Heather. He really was dead set on holding onto her. And called Dean Phillips, and told her that animal sacrifice was going on, and horrible things were happening in the Carleton Druids, and out at Farm House, and that she really ought to be concerned. And I knew Dean Philips from an academic thing the year before, where I had petitioned to take a bio credit by examination, and she had really helped me out, and she knew me from that, and knew me as, you know, a relatively sane person or something. And she said to me, "I was so relieved when I saw your name on the Farm House residence roster. What's going on?" And I could put it together, because I was, you know...Heather had in confidence...you know, she was looking for people to give her sympathy, and she had told this whole story about her awful boyfriend. Her boyfriend had even threatened her with court action for...I mean, the guy was just nuts. And he had said he could get her for statutory rape, as he was younger. And he would do it if she didn't get back to him. And so with this whole business of her informing him in no uncertain terms that Carleton different, and she was now going with a bisexual witch....Dean Philips said, "Well, when I saw that it was Farm House, which had the purpose of being natural history house," she said, "are you doing any taxidermy, are stuffing any animals out there, is there a legitimate purpose for..." He said things about entrails and stuff. And I said, "No, no, no. Not even that was going on. There's nothing whatsoever to this." And it was so frightening. And it was just...I mean, I told her about the vegetable sacrifices and everything. Yeah, that was a major episode. And she believed me, and I told her...I had also just been approached, Heiko and I both, by someone who was doing an article for the Carleton Voice about the re-emergence of the Druids, and both Heiko and I would be interviewed. And Dean Philips hadn't known about that, and she said, "Oh, that's wonderful, that's great." And I said what was going to happen, and this woman was gonna come out and take photos of us both...Steve Philips was saying, "Do you have anything about the Druids that I could send to Heather's parents?" You know, to let her know that this is not some horrible cult, you know, dismembering animals or something. And I said, "Well, there's this thing coming out." And Dean Philips said oh, that would be perfect, that would be great. And so I heard nothing more about this matter, but it was one of the incidents that brought home, you know, this is not all sunny fun and games...it's very serious shit to some people. It can be made into very serious shit because most people think it's damned weird, and that's, you know...and if they say, "Oh, they're doing whatever...their rights..."

MS: Seriously, I'm thinking of some follow-up things to that, because I remember, like maybe '90...Beltane of '91 or

something, there was the hush where Heather was up on the Hill, and boom! It was very hush-hush, and I couldn't figure out what it was about, but suddenly Beltane...boom! fell flat. And apparently someone had pushed her at the alter stone, and maybe thrown blood onto the stone...some crazy guy. So I'm just thinking maybe...

AC: Maybe this was that guy. I should talk about this, because it's probably the most...one of the more interesting things. As the Druids became more public, one of the first things I heard was that the Carleton Christian Fellowship was praying for us. And I knew some people in CCF. One of the people I met through Council for Religious Understanding was John Johnson (laughs), who did come from Wisconsin. He was this tall, really blond guy. Nice guy. He originally came as a Quaker, to the Council for Religious Understanding, but he underwent a conversion. I think it with CCF that he started hanging around...but with one of the more conservative and more dogmatically Christian groups. And I think it's from him I heard they were praying for us. And I said I was offended, and I said something like, "Oh, thank you, we'll pray for them too at our next ritual." I'm just giving my own emotional responses so you understand...I mean, at the time I was this, you know, nineteen-year-old, or whatever I was...Anyway, it became a force on campus, or it became that hadn't existed before, the Druids. Something that could be one the one hand played with by other people who weren't part of us, on the first hand, or whatever. Certainly some of the Christian groups found us...found a focus for...you know, I don't know, (laughs) saving lost souls or...whatever. That right here on campus were people openly calling themselves Pagan, and openly...kindly, but firmly, saying, you know, "No, we don't believe what you believe." I never got any hassle from Christian, and as part of the Council for Religious Understanding, I thought it was important to be as open as possible about what we did, and to allow people to come to our rituals, anybody, if they wanted. Heiko was not as much into that. He was other one who usually sat on the Council. He felt a lot of people want privacy, and want only a group of people they know they can trust when they're doing ecstatic dancing, or you know, whatever they're doing...Magic working, which is in my definition just prayer. It's where you raise and raise energy, and then...send the energy to some specific purpose. Ones that we did that I remember include a couple of sweat lodges for endangered species...one for a friend of ours who was going into the military, to send him some energy. Those were purposes I remember.

MS: Was that [name indecipherable]?

AC: I don't remember who...just...this raising of energy and sending, it was not a huge part of what we did. But anyway, on the Religious Understanding Council, Heiko thought, "No, our rituals are private, they're for insiders only." And I thought we had nothing to hide, let's be as open as we can. And we made a compromise, and we had one big open ritual for Druids. And I have a poster still from that, Nat Case, made the poster, and it said "Druids, One Night Only! Come Celebrate the Season of Fall and the Rising Moon," or something, "Hill of Three Oaks, Nine p.m." And we invited some folks to come. And we had a tradition that I think they picked up at Pagan spirit gathering, of...there was a circle of participants, people who wanted to actually do the chants, and accept the Waters, and stuff like this. And then there was what they called the Circle of Fair Witness, that's people who didn't want to participate, but were friendly, or at least not hostile, and would stand around and watch. And so we had at

least that one big open ritual that was very public. We got some people - it wasn't huge, the weather was cold...But I think John Johnson came to that one, and some other folks that I didn't recognize at all, from other groups, Christian groups, or whatever was on campus.

Some time in the Spring of that year, of '88 now, graffiti began to appear that said "DENMAD," D-E-N-M-A-D, and that's "damned" spelled backwards. And I still have no idea who was doing that. It wasn't one of us, or one of the people I knew. And "Denmad" symbol, this "Denmad" was written several places, including by the computer center, and in front of the library, and in some sort of chemical that killed the grass, out on the Hill of Three Oaks. And, again, it hit the 'Tonian, you know, there was some suspicion, whatever, or not suspicion, but people were saying, "Well, are these the Druids doing this? Is this, you know, Druidism, are you responsible for this?" Of course not, and I recall something good that Heiko said, was basically, "We worship the Earth, we're working to save the Earth, and why would we put chemical on the grass that kills the grass?" Especially up on the Hill, it's like graffiti on a church. And he kind of made a big deal about it, and that he was offended by it, it was religiously offensive. I think he went out and did something for the grass, like he reseeded it, or he did something publicly to try to erase the graffiti.

I ran into...okay, another story. A man, a staff member, whose name I don't recall right now, who was in the post office, probably still is...God, I wish I could remember his name. Middle-aged man, full-time staff member. We got a note from him, the Druids got a note, that said he had intercepted a mailing that was supposed to be an all-campus mailing by us, by the Druids, that had seemed so odd, that he wanted confirmation from us. And indeed, it was spurious. It was somebody trying to send something really weird to everybody on campus. And there were boxes of it, just like all, you know, all clubs, all Carleton clubs could, at least at that time, do a mass mailing, just by dropping off a box of enough flyers. And this was some really ...narrative thing about...it was just a narrative, it was a story, several paragraphs about a cosmic creation, and something about...I think weird shit, some gryphons...it had vaguely sort of cabbalistic, satanic weird shit all mixed together. I can't remember it exactly, but something about the unicorn mated with the snake, or something. It was nothing to do with Druid stuff, and it was...ostensibly put out by us, and I think it might even have had our phone number, which was certainly public, I mean, Heiko's number as the Druid contact person, or whatever. Well he snitched...I mean, this guy snitched it and didn't let it go out, he said, you know, "Stop that," and "let's not put it out until we get confirmation." And I went later to thank him for that, you know, and I said...was his name Eisner? Eis-something...Eishorn, Eishner, something like that. And I said, you know, thank you, and I had known him in other contexts, and said, "I'm a Druid too, and I really appreciate your catching this." And he kind of gulped, and he said, "Yeah, that's my job. I've heard a little bit about Druid worship, like those kids over wherever they were who set that bum on fire..." And I came really close again to that really scary zone, because this was a good man who I knew in other contexts, and who, you know, certainly is a staff member to student...we were in good relationship, and he was doing his job, but his church, or whatever, was equating anything non-Christian, whatever, with some very sick happenings.

There had been some episode where some teenage boys around town - not here, exactly, but maybe in Faribault?

Somewhere close by, set this old vagrant on fire. And this guy, the mail clerk...the staff member, he was thinking that that was our kind of thing. And even with that in his head, he still pulled the mail, and contacted us. And in some ways that's really beautiful, and it's really touching that he would do that, and on the other hand it's really sad and scary to me, personally, how much misinformation there is. So, anyway, as we became more public, we also got targeted, to some extent, by some pranksters. I don't know who they were...Nat Case...if you ever get a hold of him, ask him about...Nat is a good friend of mine. We lived in Farm House together. And he said he thought some weird groups at Carleton, very secretive...that he had seen some people out in the Arb once, all dressed in robes, and it wasn't the Druids. We didn't have robes of our own to wear, certainly not that all looked alike. And he said he saw a bunch of men in robes that all looked alike, who were like student age, all down...they walked past him, he was down by the river.

MS: I saw that once...

AC: You did?

MS: I was sitting at the sign fire over in the Oak grove, and there was like...I came in there, and I had wood up to my nose, and I couldn't see what I was doing. I just dropped the wood, and there was this circle of about seven or eight people...they were all blond, and they were all wearing light clothing.

AC: Maybe they're Oles.

MS: And I thought I recognized a Carleton student. But I came back with [rest indecipherable]...They put up a cross, in the place of the maypole.

AC: They put up a cross in place of the maypole. Very interesting...That's right, the Denmad thing would have crosses associated with it. There were little...it would say "Denmad," and then a little cross. Very interesting.

EH: When you would describe Druidism to someone, would you use the word religion?

AC: I guess I would. But it was clear to me, and certainly from the way I got into it, that it was a religion or a philosophy. Other people have said a spiritual philosophy, that you can take on along with other ones. You need not give up your spirituality or your religion to be a Druid. For me it was something to call what I believed, and I got involved, as I think I've described, in the public aspects of it, for what you might call idealistic reasons. I did not, and still do not, really feel my own spiritual connections with the world except when I'm alone. I did a lot of outreach work, because I thought it was important. I thought it was high time that this kind of thing be recognized and legitimized, and I wanted to spread it around to other young people, like myself, who in essence were already...you know, were already somehow converts, or were already feeling these ways, that there were other ways of approaching the sacred, and that to look back at the old ways was a good way. That's why I was so public. I know the first Carleton Druids were adamant that this was a philosophy. They didn't know about the Pagan movement, as such, and they weren't connected with it for a long time. Many of them are still Christian, and I think one of them is a Christian minister now. Heiko was pretty firmly Christian for while, and for a while he was saying he considered himself both Druid and Christian. As I said, for myself it was not that. The Druidism we had was pretty loosely woven, as I'm sure you know. We would invoke the Earth Mother, and the male principle, sometimes, sort of secondarily, in the form of the Celtic God, I guess, Dalon Ap Landu, the lord of the grove. But we were very much a Unitarian-type group, you know,

free-flowing...people would essentially invoke whatever God image they chose. Some of us were into Hindu mythology by then, and would invoke Shiva and Devi...Brandon was very much into Pan, the God Pan...now I'm coughing all the time. This we saw as perfectly fine. We saw whatever you wanted to call the divine as acceptable. There are a couple of chants that I recall - we had a guy from a Jewish background once come to one of our rituals, and there's a chant for the Goddesses, that's Isis, Astarte, Idiana, Hecate, Demeter, Kali, Ynana, and then there's a corresponding one with God names, old God names...Pan, Dionysus, Odin, something, something, and it includes Baal, the Baal of the bible, whose name is related to word balinose, apparently, and it comes back to the beautiful...anyway, an old, old word, and an old, old name for the male consort of the Goddess. And this guy freaked out, he's like, "I can't say Baal! I'll go to hell if I worship Baal!" And we said, oh, okay, don't say it, you know. And, you know, he was kind of joking around, he was kind of kidding, or he wouldn't have been there. It wasn't really freaking him. But as far as I was concerned, that was fine. And we had a couple of folks from St. Olaf come over and join us...

****End of Side One****

AC: Anyway, so we had the occasional Olaf student, even, coming over to be part of our rituals. Heiko took a lot of charge of that. He was, I think, cross-registered for some class over there, and he'd put notices that Druid rituals were happening up over there. And this guy, Sam Adams, who was a music major, or musically inclined, he wrote a chant. And it's...(sings) All good things from you, mother, all good things from you. /All good things from you, mother, all good things from you. /Your's the dawn so new, mother, your's the sun-drawn dew, mother. / All good things from you, mother, all good things from you. (laughs) So now you can have it again, if you want.

MS: Spring it on 'em.

AC: Spring it on Sam, yeah. But there was a young woman named Christie...very powerful, interesting, and very innocent woman. Really tall, like six feet tall, you know, Norwegian stock. And she came over, and she was so interested in the idea of worshipping Goddesses, and so careful, and so frightened in some ways that she was doing wrong by her God, and by the way she'd been raised. And she and I got to be friends, and I remember she wanted to do a meditation once, and we took some Manheim Steamroller to music, in a boom box, up to the hill, and lit a fire. And she really wanted to do this, and the moon was full, I think, and to be there, and to salute the rising moon, but she asked me, "Is it alright if ask...you know, if I bring God into this?" And I said of course, you know, that's...yeah, sure. And she asked God, the Christian God, to bless what we were doing, and to understand that we were meaning no wrong, or something like this. And then she spoke to the moon Goddess. And I really liked her. I don't know what's happened to her since. So for me, at least, and I think for most of us, it was very heterodox.

EH: You mentioned, way back, about...I believe it was Curtis, or someone, who was a folk dancer. And that reminded me that I'd heard in the late '60's, early '70's, there was a big overlap between the folk dancers and the Druids. Were there overlaps that were obvious in your time with other groups?

AC: Yes, oh yes.

EH: Which ones?

AC: Definitely with residents of Farm House, who were thus drawn from people with demonstrated interest in natural history and Earth preservation. Definite overlap with the computer crowd, very...many of these people were all the same. Folk dancing, yes. I was not a big folk dancer, but many of my best friends were, like Judy(?) and Rachel. And, well...like Andre too. And Andrea Dawson was big into it. Jan did that also, Heiko some. I was maybe the only one of the group that wasn't a big folk dancer. Folk dance, Farm House, computers, and what you might call the science fiction crowd. Some of these people never had anything to do with the Druids, but many people who were occasional Druid participants were big into, like the Dr. Who club, and the Star Trek fan club, which in my time were more...groups of people who got together to watch the show in question, you know, rather than doing anything else outside that together. So yeah, our social groups overlapped quite a bit. And there were romances in between all of these things. Most straight, a few gay (laughs). But, yeah, these four groups I can name as being definitely interrelated.

EH: I'd like to know something about how you feel that your Druid experiences has stayed with you, and informed your post-Carleton outlook. Do you still consider yourself a Druid? If so, how so?

AC: I do for the sake of history. I very much like the idea of being tied into a tradition like this, you know, little as it is, and homegrown as it is. Carleton was my village for the four years that I was here, and it was the first time I ever had that feeling. I'm delighted to be part of that, and to be...you know, asked to interview like this. I've gone back to solitary practice when I want to pray, or to celebrate. I haven't done it with a group, really, since I left Carleton. While I was here, I called everything I was into in my belief system Druid. Now that I'm not with other Druids, the closest group I've found is Unitarians. And they have a Pagan element now, formally, within their structure, called the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans, CUUPS. And I sort of stumbled into a group like that in Ohio last time I was home. It's been an experience. It was my first big experience in outreach in a religious way. This past summer...well, I first made contact with the Circle Sanctuary people, you know, Selena Fox, and her husband Dennis, through that lecture that Selena gave back in '86. And I subsequently subscribe to their newspaper - they have a quarterly that comes out - and went to a couple of their gatherings, went to PSG myself the following year, the summer of '87, and again in 1991, and to a couple different events at their land, down in East 'Consin. So I've stayed in touch with them. And they're very eclectic - they have people from many different Pagan paths there, meeting there and doing retreats there, basically. I did an internship with them this past summer. I wanted a place to work and find out more about them as working psychologists, who also have this religion, or this spiritual bent. And I found myself using a lot of the same skills and doing a lot of the same things that I had as a Druid on the Council for Religious Understanding. And, you know, tabling in Sayles-Hill, we also did that, I didn't mention, but we had, you know, the annual freshman round-up, or whatever it was called, where you have a table, and say what you believe. And that's where one of the Carleton Unitarians - I was not part of that part while I was here, but this wonderful woman came up to me, and said, "I'm so glad you're here! You're the only other liberal religious group on campus, and we're so sick of being next to the fundamentalists every year!" It's like, okay. So we

got a welcome from them. It's a part of my life, but it's not....I haven't gone and founded a grove. Yeah, I don't know what to say.

EH: Are there ways of thinking that you find yourself possibly being able to Druidic, that you find stay with you?

AC: Yeah. You know, the things that have stayed most with me are...this little prayer, the returning to the Earth Mother prayer, which I've used quite often, both when I throw out my compost, and a couple of times when I've pulled a dead dog off the road. It's a prayer that you can also use when you learn about a death. And the copy of the letter that's within the Chronicles, called Joan's Epistle to the Myopians, you know, I find really wonderful. And yeah, you sort of pseudo-King James' language of it all is sort of funny. But the sentiments expressed in that are very profound to me, and...I won't say this is the first place...no, I shouldn't say that. To know that there were other people who thought that way, and cared enough to put it down on paper, and include it as part of the Druid Chronicles has been powerful. The sense that...it was the first place I got the sense that I was part of a community in my spiritual way. And though I choose to be [a] fairly solitary member of the community, I still now know where I am, and that I'm not alone. What else...I definitely gained a better knowledge of my own history. As I said, part of thrill of it, for me, was also the thought that we were trying to go back to something that our ancestors had done - some of our ancestors, some of mine, anyway - had done before the advent of Christianity in Europe. You know, they were people, they had a religion. And one of their old religions, the Celtic side, anyway, was this Druid thing. And what we did was not Celtic reconstruction, by any stretch of the imagination. But just the thought, and the name, and the association with the Oak tree, which is a very ancient sacred symbol, wove that into the mixture for me, back to my own roots, in a small way. And I learned about the cycle of the holidays, which I certainly had not known before. We celebrated...this is history again, but we celebrated the holiday of Oimele a couple of times, which is pretty obscure, but it's the beginning, the very beginning of Spring. It's Candlemas in the Christian calendar, end of February, and I recall...Oh yeah, one of the lovely things about the chapel business was [that] Jewelnel Davis allowed us to use the chapel space for Druid rituals during the winter, when it was really cold out on the Hill. And we would, you know...very grateful for that, and we would look at the limestone walls, and I recall leading rituals in there, and talking about the limestone, and the little shell-creatures that had made it, and that it too was part of the Earth, and though we were inside, we were never away from the Earth. And we had a ritual in there once where we passed a chalice full of milk on Oimele, instead of water. And I find that the conception of these holidays, as my life goes on, and as I experience more, I tie in more with the different holidays. And I had no exposure to that before I came here. I was in Germany this past February, and they had always said that Oimele was the beginning of the lambing season, when the sheep and the cows first lactate. And I thought, God, that's way too early. But in Germany, it's true, the first lambs were born right about then. And so, I'm like yeah, this isn't just bullshit (laughs). So, I don't know if I'm answering the question, but, you know...

EH: I think that might very well be a good place to draw this to a close. If you have anything else you'd like to add, go ahead, but otherwise....

AC: Let me think for a second...Just to thank you both - I'm glad this is being set down. I don't know who will hear this, but,

you know, good luck to you. And I hope the arboretum continues. I hope the Hill of Three Oaks remains a site where people can gather in a more or less natural setting. There's gonna be a lot of change at Carleton in the next couple years, and I really hope they don't draw lines on that and make it into a football field. 'Cause the Arb has many beautiful places, but the Hill itself is someplace special.

EH: Thank you very much.

AC: Thank you.



Figure 6 Carleton Druids 1988 at Hill of 3 Oaks.
Back Row: Dimitry Goufman, Carron Perry, Liz Mindel, Sarah Van Orman & Gina Cambell.
Two on left: Branden Schield & Unknown.
Three on right: Heather Grunberg (hiding), Fitz Bushnell (obscured) and Curtis Lum.
Front Row: Alice Cascorbi, Joe Walser (picking nose) and Heiko Koester (with horns).

Interview with Michael Scharding

Carleton College Oral History Program
27 August, 1996

This transcript has been lightly edited for clarity. The original audiotaped recordings are available in the Carleton College Archives.

Michael Scharding: MS
Eric Hilleman: EH



Figure 7 Alice & Mike, Hill of 3 Oaks 1993.

[Tape 1, Side A]

EH: This is a tape for the Carleton oral history program. The interviewer is Eric Hilleman, College Archivist, and the narrator today is Michael Scharding, class of '94. The date is the August 27, 1996, and we're talking in the Gould Library. Michael, why don't you tell us a bit to begin with about your own personal background and how you came to Carleton College.

MS: Well, my father was in the military, doing food research and stuff, and also inspecting meat plants. And so we moved around quite a bit around my first 16 years and I lived in 12 or 14 states. But I had always considered Minnesota to be my home, primarily because we have a family cabin up near Hibbing, which I had gone to every year of my life, for summer vacation. And so when I started deciding in high school where to go for college, I naturally wanted to go to Minnesota, because I had grown to love the state very much. My qualifications for Carleton, for any kind of college, was that it had to be in Minnesota, or someplace with a lot of trees. It had to have an indoor and outdoor track and field program, and had to be small, because I didn't like the idea of a large college, and mostly private colleges too. Though I went to public school most of my life, thought they were quite good public schools.

That really narrowed it down to St. Olaf, Macalester, and Carleton, though I did look at Dickinson. I knew when I was looking through publications back at my High School and I saw the Carleton folder, I instantly decided at that point that

it was for me. There was something about the pictures - I don't know. They had a package perfectly for me. And I opted for early decision, and they accepted me, along with Olaf and Macalester, but I decided to go to Carleton, though I did do tours and stuff of the various colleges before I came. The track and field thing fell through because I busted my knee right before I came to Carleton, which interfered with my track career. But the trees - actually I think it was Lyman lakes, more than anything else, that convinced me to come to Carleton. Because I really liked water, and I thought it was great that they had a lake on campus. I lived in Goodhue for three years straight, four, if you count living in Myers. I always thought it was great, having your own little house next to a lake, something that most people only dream about doing.

EH: Okay, good. I think I wanted to ask this point too, something about your religious background, because that's going to be relevant to what we're going to talk about later.

MS: Okay, I was raised a Roman Catholic. My parents are Roman Catholic, but two of my grandparents - my maternal grandfather and my paternal Grandmother were both Protestant, and back then, a Catholic marrying a Protestant was kind of like a mixed marriage, or even interracial, because they married Irish and German together, on both sides. But it was never a very powerful Catholic, because it wasn't that old on both sides.

But I've been an acolyte and gone to CCD on Sundays, though CCD doesn't really teach you very much anymore, but it keeps you out of trouble, at least on Sundays. I guess I came to Carleton pretty much in mind being Catholic, but it's kind of interesting - people talk about like Dungeons and Dragons breeding paganism, and they might be right in some aspects of that, because I did play Dungeons and Dragons a lot, and I was familiar with mythology since I was about seven or eight years old. My first D&D game would probably have been around age nine or ten, and I played a druid, my first character, which is kind of interesting. And I've always liked playing the druids and the rangers, ever since then. Both my parents were mountain climbers, and they're veterinarian doctors, and very interested in old history, so we often went to old historical villages and they showed me about nature when I was growing up. Not an incredible amount, compared to some people, but more than I think was the average. And I'd always been more interested in the ancient mythologies, because they were more exciting than Sunday school. And when I was a kid I read everything I could about vampires, Norse mythology, and monsters, everything kind of supernatural. And I still have some interest in that today, though my interests have moved more in an eastern direction, to China and Japan recently. But I'm very prone to mythology, and that shows up, the fact that I named about 150 sites all over campus after various mythologies and stuff. Much to the annoyance of the other Druids, who don't know what I'm talking about.

EH: You hadn't heard anything about the existence of Druids at Carleton before getting here, had you?

MS: Nope. I hadn't heard a thing about them. In fact, when I got here, it took me about six months before I found them, finally found enough information that I could finally attend one of the ceremonies. It was very difficult to track them down, because they were in a slump, back in '88 through '90. Enough people had graduated from the early renaissance, maybe '86 to '89, that they were kind of getting their feet

back on the ground with Andrea Davis. And she's not the most organized leader that we've had, but better than most.

EH: Why don't you tell me about some of the activities that you got involved with at Carleton and then use that as a springboard to talk about how you got involved with the Druids?

MS: It looked like I was going to be majoring in extra-curricular activities, because I essentially signed up for far more activities that it was possible to pursue. I was in the juggling club, I was in the Science Fiction club, the folk music society, folkdancing, social dancing, I did a little bit of intramural Frisbee, but not much; a couple other small little groups that I can't remember now, but since I was spending far too much time doing extra-curricular activities, I started to develop - I came to Carleton with a fascination for the Grateful Dead, after essentially seventeen years of not listening to any radio, and so my first real music interest was with the Grateful Dead, and eventually I managed to get into folk music here at Carleton.

Mark Heiman was at that time a Junior or Sophomore, and he played, he had little miniature concerts where he would sing Irish and Scottish folk tales, and he would sing for six or seven hours, after science fiction club. And I would just sit there and listen, because I thought it was great. I love listening to performers. And at that time, my interest in Celtic things really started to peak. And I started studying languages at that point, and getting as much information as possible on the Celts. And someone told me that well, you're interested in Celtic stuff, why not check out the Carleton Druids? and I said, okay. This was the spring of 1990. By that point I kind of knew about them, but I didn't really know anyone who was in it. And I decided to check these people out, and little did I know that they had practically nothing to do with Celtic stuff. The thing that Sam and I first had grudges about in the beginning (but have since mellowed out about quite a bit) was that I kept pestering Matt Cohen to tell me when the next thing happened, 'cause they were having all kinds of stuff happening over at Farmhouse and the lower Arboretum at the time, over in the Oak Opening, which is now prairie and we can't use anymore.

So that spring, on April first, I got a note saying to show up on the bald spot, dressed in funny clothing. And it was signed 'Pookums.' And after asking enough people, I found out this was Mark Danburg, and this was his way of inviting people to Druid things. So I showed up wearing nothing particularly silly, and I met Joe Banks wearing a boot on his head, and Mark Danburg dressed in polka dots. And it was raining, so we went to the chapel. And I met Andrea there, for the first time, and I can't remember the other two women there. But I think Bill Shearer might have been there also. It wasn't actually a druid ritual that they were having, but it was an Erisian ritual. An Erisian is a person who believes in the goddess of chaos. And April fool's day was a particularly good day for them. And so there was some kind of washing machine anthem, like 'rinse, recycle, spin, wash' or something, and they handed out Oreo cookies, and spun around until they fell down. And I remember going home extremely disappointed because, first of all that was not Celtic, and second of all it was plain silly.

This was during my more serious phase of Druidism. I helped out with some campfires along then, but the first time was Beltane, after that, which was much more serious. It was over in the little grove, also known as the druid den, within a hundred meters of the hill of three oaks. It has a little wooden gate there, and a depression in the ground surrounded by conic hills around it, making it a nice wind trap, where none

of the wind can get into it. I don't remember much about the ceremony, but I do remember camping out there with Sam Adams, from Olaf, that night, and we both griped about how unCeltic it was, and that was the start of one of our close friendships. But I didn't do very much Druidism in the 1989-1990 year, but things did pick up the next year. Fall term, I remember, I started doing a great amount of research in Celtic history and doing research for credit, independently, on Celtic deities and stuff, and I was ignoring my Biology major at that point, to the point of hazard. And I had pretty much given up on my Biology major fall of '90 and thinking about history, but I wasn't sure if I really wanted to. So I decided to go to Scotland, to do some on-site language study and Celtic history study. Before I left, I was still not extremely active, I showed up like one out of every two rituals, and they still weren't inviting me to all of them. I didn't hear about some of them until it was too late. This is still under Andrea Davis' Archdruidcy. And I remember I became second order right before I left, which for me was a very definitive moment of independent religious thought at the time. I was kind of spiritually mature for making a quest at that point, right before I went to Scotland.

EH: What was involved in the second order thing?

MS: Well, during the mid-'80s the Druids had revived Druidism in some form or another, which was talked about by Alice Cascorbi in one of the other interviews. And basically, the older Druids were more into, well, they had their own tradition and were also more into eastern thought and just a wide eclectic choice, but they were definitely not neo-pagan. The people who revived it in '85, '86 were more Native American, neo-pagan, and Wiccan oriented. They occasionally did the old rituals, from the Carleton Druids, but most of the time they made them up, and they had stopped the third order. The third order had come to a halt around 1984, and it wasn't passed on, but the first and second order continued on afterwards. Normally a first or second order Druid has to be ordained by an Archdruid of a grove - an Archdruid is always a third-order Druid, at least in the older days. Now, after '85, there really wasn't an Archdruid, and there weren't any third-orders, officially, though people did vigil, to stay out all night, and just assume that they were third order at that point, because they couldn't find anyone to ordain them. And second order was passed on by Alice Cascorbi who was ordained to the second order by a previous third-order Archdruid, probably Bob Nieman? or Tomone of the people ordained by Franquist, and so she was second order, and so she passed it on to the various people living at Farmhouse, the second and first order, which was a new thing, because normally the Archdruid has to ordain the first, second, and third orders of that grove. So they started off a tradition whereby second orders or first orders could ordain people to whatever order they were holding at the time, so that's how it continued after '85. There's no first order ceremony, but they didn't use the second-order ceremony, though they still consecrated the waters of life at various rituals.

By the early 90's, they had stopped using alcohol, mostly because Andrea Davis did not like alcohol at ceremonies. They substituted a very strong mugwort and verbane tea, which was quite effective. And there's a special ingredient, which she never told me about, but she was substituting that for the waters of life. So when I was being ordained to the second order over in the lower arboretum, I believe it was at the Oak Grove - it was one of the last rituals at the Oak Grove that I remember. Basically, she ordained Bill Scherer,

Bill Scherer ordained Matt Cohen, and Matt Cohen turned to me and said... Well, Andrea was saying that "Do you believe that the earth mother is good?" and then the person was supposed to be replying "Yes, I do." And she seals you to the second order with a druid sigil painted on your forehead, which is a circle and two lines vertically passing through the circle. And then that person ordained the next person, that person ordained the next person. But Matt Cohen turned to me and said, "Do you dig that the earth mother is groovy?" and I replied, "I dig." That was considered satisfactory, and I was ordained by Matt Cohen. Then I ordained the woman next to me, and then on and on and on. But I remember asking at that point, because I was kind of in turmoil at this point, I wasn't sure whether I wanted to leave the Catholic Church, or not, so I wanted to make sure that this oath would not violate my conformation, because when it comes to vows I'm pretty faithful to them as far as I can, and so I wanted to make sure that my oath to study Druidism wouldn't violate that oath, and I was very careful in asking this. And Andrea said that it was always a tradition that being a druid of Carleton would not violate any person's religion, though that person could change over time, if they wanted to, later, but it wasn't because of Druidism. So when she said that, I agreed to be ordained to the second order.

EH: Do you want to say a few things just generally about your attitude towards Carleton as you started?

MS: Well, the first term I studied my butt off, and I realized I didn't have to. I quickly came to the understanding that ...well, I think it was summed up best by Topher, who was a prominent protestor at Carleton, and also a member of the Juggling group, he said once that "Carleton would be a lot of fun if it wasn't for all this work." And I took that to heart pretty strongly, and I pretty much determined by the winter of my freshman year that I was not going to be the wonder that I thought I was. First of all, everyone here is incredibly smart, far smarter than at my high school, and I thought I was reasonably smart, but these people were working their butts off far more than I wanted to, because I was having so much fun, just finding people who were like me, and having fun in groups, which I hadn't done much before, that I didn't think it was worth it to waste my time doing homework here. I figured I would pass and get a degree and I'd be fine. I wasn't going to become a library rat and waste away all the time here because I'd heard that college is the best years of your life, and you should live your youth while you have it, and all these other adages, and so I had pretty much determined that I was going to get as much social growth out of these years at Carleton as I could, versus working my butt off, subjects that I'd forget about in four years, doesn't make much sense to me to work hard like that and forget it all, though it does show up nicely on your transcript, to have a nice 3.7 or something. I escaped here with a 2.7 GPA and I thought I was lucky. I basically was a lightweight when it came to classes - I'd take two serious classes and then I'd take lots of music lessons to pad my GPA. I think I ended up something like 410 out of 465 here at Carleton...somebody was working harder at being a slob than I was, and I couldn't figure out who it was. I devoted far more of my time at Carleton to extracurricular activities than just about anyone else I know, possibly excepting some senators.

EH: Tell me about your trip to Scotland.

MS: This was during the height of my Celtic nationalism, with got me in lots of trouble in airports. I went to Scotland, to the University of Glasgow on a two-week notice - I applied two weeks before the end of December, two weeks after the

deadline, and the only place that accepted me was in Scotland. I would have preferred to go to Ireland, but Scotland was the only one who would take me. So without asking Carleton for permission, I just up and left, and Carleton responded by saying, 'Oh. Don't come back, if you're not going to tell us.' Because I didn't tell them until mid-January that I wasn't coming back on January fourth. Oops. So I pretty much studied Scottish Gaelic and Scottish history and Database Programming for Historians, and just jumped right in the middle of the school year, right in the middle of a year-long class, and I came out at the top of the Gaelic class and pretty much at the bottom of the history class, because I couldn't write the papers like they did. They have this weird thing in Scotland - they don't use computers, so I had to hand-write all the papers. And I am such a lazy lout that when it comes to writing papers, I write them once. And I had to write by hand, and so I didn't revise them, so I got lousy grades. What can you say?

I was not impressed by Scotland's educational system, which consisted of lectures, lots of notes, and then exams. No discussion at all in the classroom. Not even the tutorial sessions. I was always trying to get conversations going with the little tutorial groups; not a single one would say anything in the class. Even when asked by the Professor! They just hid in their chairs, cowering before his wit and sarcasm. And I was constantly goading him, and being goaded back, and I decided that even though I did like the subject I was studying, that Scotland was not the system of education that I wanted. I preferred Carleton, with fierce in-class discussions and debates, and people talking about issues after class, something that wasn't happening over in Scotland. People did not talk about their homework after class. They weren't interested. It was just something they were doing to punch their ticket.

So basically I studied a lot of Celtic folklore, dance, and everything, and kind of found my roots, Celtically speaking, during that year. I got terribly homesick for Carleton around that time period, and decided to come back for the fall of '91. The college graciously allowed me to come back, but refused to give me any credit for the time I was gone, so that forced me to move my graduation year from 1993 to 1994, meaning an extra year. And I think that year was very important, because it gave me a chance to step away from Carleton and come back with a renewed vigor for what was truly important about Carleton, which was not classes, but the people I was meeting.

EH: Well, let's get back to your connections with the Druids again. You've said some of this already, but I'd be interested in having you sort of characterize what the Druids were like, the kinds of things that they were doing, what ritual was like, et cetera, when you first became involved with them, and how that then changed.

MS: By the time I came around in the fall of '89, to end of '92, it had switched from being Native American-based with some Wiccan things and occasional Druid things becoming almost exclusively Wiccan. All the major leaders of the group - John Burrige, Andrea Davis, Salem Clark, Celia Lange? - everyone who was really in charge of the group, were Wiccans. They weren't Unitarians or eclectic Episcopalians like in the old days, but they were Wiccans and they had a good idea of what neo-paganism was about. It was not the most open group to Christians or Jews or any monotheistic faith. It wasn't like they would run you out or anything, but they just never really talked positively about monotheism or anything like that. While I was really interested in Wiccanism

during my freshman and sophomore years, I was more interested in Celtic customs and stuff like that. Wicca, I knew, was not Celtic stuff; it was based on Anglo-Saxon history and is also based on 19th century ceremonial magic, cabalism, and other kinds of gobbledygook kind of new age - well, it wasn't new age back then, but it's now called new age stuff, and most of that stuff doesn't interest me, I don't believe in complicated magical rituals and stuff like that. So I kind of sat through them and nodded my head, and I think I rebelled more in just in the fact that these were people who were seeking religious truth than actually appreciating the products of their research, because most of their research into Wiccan and Neo-pagan thought was just not interesting to me at all. And so I just kind of hung out with them because they were the closest thing to what I was looking for. It wasn't incredibly satisfying, but it was nice being around the people. That's how I kind of characterize the '89 to '92 period.

EH: So there was something there that was attractive enough to just keep you in there.

MS: Yeah. It kept me from dropping the group. Those were the years, '89 - '92, when a lot of groups were interconnected. Essentially from '86 to '91, the Folk Music Society with Pickin' & Grinnin', the Folk Dancers, the Science Fiction Group, the Druids, and Pro Musica, everybody in those groups knew everybody else in the other groups and often were members of the same groups. It was hard being a member of one group without being a member of the other. Around '91-'92 that kind of stopped; more compartmentalization had happened, where students found they only had time for one group, in addition to their studies. I think Carleton was getting more study-oriented at that point. People were members of one group and not the others. So around '91-'92, all the groups started to separate, and people who were Druids were not necessarily into science fiction anymore, not necessarily folkdancers. That might have been one of the reasons why Druidism had elapsed there, because people didn't naturally carry over from the other ranks to fill in the groups when people graduated. Kind of a strange period. I'm sure if you interviewed Mark Heiman, he could give you a very detailed description of this process.

EH: This is sort of an aside at this point, but I wanted to ask who the cloak people are and how does that relate to Druidism?

MS: Ah yes, and the cloak people were the other group. I think it was Vanessa or Linnea Johnson? back in '87 or '88 she brought a cloak to school, and other people thought it was really neat, and they started wearing cloaks too. Not because of any Druid thing, but just because that was really neat. And cloaks are really nice in the winter - cloaks are very warm, especially to wear over the outer garments that you're wearing in the wintertime already. And they're also mysterious and romantic in their own type of way. Carleton has a Society of Creative Anachronism chapter, which recreates medieval activity, and they like to wear cloaks for their activities. And so the SCA-ers started to wear cloaks. And then the Druids around that time said you know, cloaks are really nice when you're sitting out all night in the woods with nothing much else, so why don't we all start wearing cloaks too? So they started wearing cloaks. And since all the groups were connected at the time, they all started saying 'why don't we wear cloaks too, because everyone else is wearing cloaks.' So essentially, the 'cloak people' was just a coverall term for this enormous five- or six-group clique around campus. And at one point we had something like 25 or 30 people wearing cloaks during the school year. That number has dropped down to maybe six or seven who wear

them normally, but for a while there was just a whole parade of cloaks around campus, and the only people who wear cloaks anymore are Druids and the occasional person from the SCA; I guess partly because everyone kept saying 'you're wearing a cloak - you must be a druid' and they go 'no, not really.' But after enough of these kind of inquiries, people just stopped wearing cloaks because they got tired of being asked the question. Of course, if you ask a Druid that question, they just kind of look at you, and smile. That was the preferred response.

EH: To what extent up to this '92 period of Druidism that we're talking about did that group have a sense of connectedness to the historical tradition of Druidism at Carleton? How aware were they of the origins of the group and what it was like in the decade of the sixties/early seventies?

MS: Well, the blue book of the archives, which had contained all the documents of Druidism from the beginning, was kind of lost around 1985. It was found again by one of the Druids, but he didn't hand it around to everybody else, and it got lost again at his apartment, and found again about '88, and got refound in 1994. But the blue book had never been widely distributed, only like one or two people read it at any one time. The archives had some minimal material on the Druids, but basically, when they restarted in '85, they only really had Isaac Bonewits' Druid Chronicles Evolved, which has an extremely heavy neo-paganism basis to it, and so anyone reading that, not knowing... See, I originally thought at '85 they had a break in their tradition, and they started again from scratch, using only Isaac's book, not talking to the original Druids. So unlike the previous renaissance of Druids, they didn't have a direct line back to the original founders - they were originally working from Isaac's point of view when they started the group, which was perfectly fine, because that was the way they were going anyway, because there were already people at Carleton before the Carleton Druids got revived who were interested in paganism and native American beliefs. So finding Isaac's book made it very easy for them to restart the Druids, because they were already interested in the stuff that Isaac was talking about. However, I'm starting to revise this, based on more interviews, and learning of the contacts Shelton had with them.

Most people, I've found, in the '89 to '92 period, knew the basic runup story, that the Druids had been started as a rebellion against the Chapel requirement, and had always had a playful sense of humor. Maybe one out of every three people had actually read the five little books of the Druid Chronicle. So. And that was about it. Not much more than that was actually known, and almost everything else, again, was made up, as it still continues to do. Far more tradition of the group exists outside of the printed matter, things like how to collect your firewood and what kind of people you ask to join the rituals, how do you do it, where you go, all those little details are far more important to the vast majority of Druids at Carleton than what happened in verse 2, chapter 5 of the book of Meditations, which was never very important anyway. They read the book throughout the history of Druidism, they just read the book once or twice and never saw it again, and got on with their own personal searches. Which is okay, of course. And in that way, I guess, the Druids were pretty much sticking to tradition, except that most people did not know the original liturgy of the Druids and did not see them practiced very often, if they did see it once. They were starting over from scratch ritually, using a lot of Wiccan-based liturgies and stuff. But they did talk a lot to each other about Druidism and alternate religious ideas

after rituals and with each other, and in that way they were exploring religious thoughts, which was still in tradition of the older Druids. But it was more oriented towards the neo-paganism and Wiccan ideas then talking about religion as a whole.

EH: What kind of activities were characteristic of the Druids? What was done at typical rituals or what sort of things were popular? When Druids got together in that era what did they do?

MS: Well, one of the things that separates us from the older Druids is that we have sweat lodges all the time. This was one of the major things from the Native American interests was that we started having sweat lodges, originally over at Farmhouse and then later wherever we could find firewood. Setting up the sweat lodge was basically a ritual in itself because you had to pick up dead, fallen wood, carry it to the site, build a frame, cover it with blankets that you had carried on your back from Goodhue or wherever they were. All these little details that you had to fill to get it ready, and digging a hole, finding the sage. It's a lot of work, five or six hour's work by oneself, easily, setting up a sweat lodge. Then there was all the mailbox stuffing of invitations to invite people. It was by far the biggest type ritual we had at Carleton was the sweat lodge, because there's so much preparation work required.

Basically, you show up, sit around the campfire for about an hour while the rocks are heating up, talk about various things, and basically Andrea was the only one who led sweat lodges while I was here. You get in a circle, you call the four directions, ask for their blessing, drink some more mugwort tea special. You strip down, get in the sweat lodge, close it up; the rocks are already in there, and you pour water on the rocks - you have four people, each one calls one of the four direction, then they call the sky and the earth, then they say hi to all their plant and animal brothers, and usually there's some form of anonymity involved, where anything that's said in the sweat lodge cannot be told to other people afterwards. Then they usually sang one of two chants, they get the energy going, and then they do some random singing, noises, meditation perhaps, where you imagine that you are a tree, and go to the roots, then you go to the roots around the roots, then you start traveling around the landscape, kind of diffusing your consciousness as far as you can, which is quite easy with her mugwort tea! Then you ask for blessings, and pray for different people who are in trouble and stuff, and ask for wisdom; then you come back from meditation around the hills, the dirt around the roots, then you go to the roots, then you come back into yourself, and eventually you're human again. Then you thank the four directions in reverse order, and then you open up the flap and you go outside, and everyone's steaming, and it's kind of neat; then you roll in the dewy grass, then you dry off by the fire. If you want to, you do it again, make it pretty quick. But it's the most intense form of ritual that we've ever done at Carleton. Far more than anything Carleton has ever seen before us.

The Wiccan rituals were mostly new-moon rituals. They had the Beltane one in the spring with the maypole dance when they could, and designed one - usually it's just a big bonfire somewhere - basically it's similar to the Native American that you call the four directions, they call them watchtowers, usually there's a circle drawn on the ground before the thing starts to cut off that space magically from the rest of the universe, which is kind of different from Druidic ritual, even Reformed Druidic Ritual, which generally just takes place in nature, versus being separated from nature - that's a hand-me-down from ceremonial magic, where you

build a protective circle to protect you against the demons or what-not. There's a lot more, like you have magic knives, and you have cups - the knife is for the male element, the cup is for the female element; there's some sexual symbology with the two things when you unite them. There's some cakes you pass around, in Wiccan ritual. You really have to interview Andrea or Michelle Curtis, since they're much more into Wiccan theology than I am. Basically, Wiccan ritual has a female goddess who's pretty much head honcho. She might or might not have a male consort who runs around the woods with the animals, but the more feminist you get the less likely he is to show up in the ritual, because male gods are 'icky.' They don't like them. So.

EH: Do you know anything about the Wiccan history of people like Andrea or Michelle? Did their Wiccanism predate their involvement with the Druids?

MS: I'm going to be interviewing them before I leave, hopefully, or I'll have them come in. Most of the Wiccans come to Carleton now with Wiccanism before they arrive. Because witchcraft is mainstream enough that most people have heard about it before they get to Carleton, if they're already in that area. I didn't know about it before I came here, so it was kind of.. I don't know. The whole thing about witchcraft is that they for some reason have chosen a really stupid name for themselves, because they've got to reclaim this word, and make it good again, just like homosexuals have to reclaim the word 'queer,' and lesbians have to reclaim the word 'dyke,' and so on. I'm sure there's a pretty good reason why they're going through all this trouble, but I always liked the word 'druid' because, except for the human sacrifices, we have a pretty popular image: you know, tree huggers. I kind of like that. A lot less trouble from the naysayers.

EH: Well, tell me some thing about changes over time then, in your own connections with Druidism, and how the group changed focus.

MS: The group had pretty much dropped the Native American part of it when most of those people had graduated in 1988/89, and it switched to a more Wiccan/pagan orientation from '88 to '92. They had pagan studies from '86 to '89 or so, where they'd have intellectual discussions on books on paganism. They'd bring in speakers to talk about 'what is Satanism and how is it different from neo-Paganism' and such, and they'd invite people from around the campus to come and listen to them, but generally most of the Christian societies just kind of avoided the pagan studies altogether. One thing that was noteworthy was that they were more activist than the older Druids were. Most people who come who are neo-Pagans or Wiccans are afraid that they're going to get burned at the cross at some time during they're lives. So they have this paranoia to some degree, probably rightly so, that the Christians are out to get them. For this purpose, the group since '86 had had a much closer connection with the college than ever before, because they wanted to make sure first of all that the college was never on the side of whatever group decided to pick on them, but also because they wanted to use the college's resources to help fund activist activities, like bringing the speakers, letter-writing campaigns, and such, so that Carleton College had actually funded Pagan Studies as a student organization, from '86 to '89, when it collapsed. After that, I think from '90 to '92, there was 'Catalyst' run by Salem Clark and Celia Lange, both of whom were solitary witches who didn't do much druid rituals, but they kind of had Sunday morning breakfasts at their apartment, and we discussed various issues of paganism. But, that was not officially funded by the College, but it was still a form of

separate organization from the Druids to kind of bring people together and talk about these issues of where Neo-Paganism fits into society. During my Archdruidcy of '93-'94, I founded 'The Friends of the Earth-Mother at Carleton College' which was a front for getting money for the Carleton Druids without making the Carleton Druids an official organization. Because if you're an official organization, then you have to have your membership open to perusal by the administration, and we didn't want all of our members' names to be released, because of this same paranoia. So we had a front organization to filter money to our group. And I think we got about \$500 dollars that year, and we brought in Isaac Bonewits and bought candle wax and purchased some magazine subscriptions and such with that money. And in spring of 1995, I think, or 1996, Becky Hroback and Anne Graham and Michelle Curtis finally got the Carleton Druids sponsored as an official student organization. And so Carleton's longest-running unofficial organization ended 33 years of being an outside organization and became an official organization. So far no major problems, but they're directly budgeted now, and I can see the '86 to '96 period as being a quest for legitimation of alternate spirituality at Carleton, far more than the older Druids ever did. They kind of played around with the idea and had fun with it, but they weren't dead serious on becoming an official organization, like the Druids at Carleton were since '86.

There was a lot more seriousness involved with the rituals. Most of the rituals were held for specific purposes, like healing, trying to - well, they never did black magic that I knew of, but it was to influence powerful people not to do something stupid, like putting nuclear waste on Prairie Island, and things like that. Environmental issues. We held rituals to clear up bad feeling in the air around Carleton at crisis points, for good luck on grades, stuff like that. The rituals were held for specific purposes, rather than being an excuse to meditate, like in the older days. And in that way I think they were different. And at that point I think I was more interested in just doing rituals for meditation than doing magic for practical purposes. Because even though I do believe that magic can exist, I don't feel like messing around with it because when you start disturbing the cosmic order with your own personal desires, I think you might cause all sorts of chaos to happen. So I don't generally try to influence things through magic, if I can help it. Though from a Catholic background, I do believe that prayer is effective. But to have huge rituals, with all sorts of magic being raised up, sounds a little bit like using a machine gun to catch a butterfly. It's overdoing it a little bit, in my opinion, with dangerous consequences for the bystanders.

EH: At what point did you or other people get interested in researching the history of the group and reviving some of the old forms and traditions and offices and things like that?

MS: Well, in February of either '92 or '93 - I can't remember - I essentially became very interested in becoming third order, because during that time period I was getting to the point where I wanted to start leading rituals. And the group had faltered, back in '91-'92, because of John Burrige departing. There weren't Archdruids between '86 and '92. There were strong minds who made sure that rituals happened, and that was all there was. There wasn't any kind of totalitarian 'I'm in charge, we're going to make sure this thing happens' and such, it was more like someone showed up and said 'I'm going to lead a ritual on this day. Any of you guys want to come up?' and we'd all show up. And then someone else

would say, 'I'm going to lead a ritual' and then people would show up. That's generally how things worked. Whenever someone felt like doing a ritual, something happened. Andrea Davis, from the period of '89 - '92, ended up being pretty much the only person who ever decided to do anything. And as a result, it started to develop into an Archdruidcy, because no one else organized anything, so she ended up de facto becoming Archdruid. There's an old proverb among us that the person who runs away from authority the slowest becomes Archdruid. So Andrea became Archdruid by default. But after three or four years, she was tired of that. And by the spring of '92 she pretty much had washed her hands of the whole group. I think she graduated in '93, a year late.

However, I was seriously helping her do all the detail gruntwork of carrying everything and collecting firewood and stuff, but I didn't want to lead a ritual at that point, until the spring of '93, when I felt I had sufficiently gotten a feel for the group. Now I would have graduated in the spring of '93 if it hadn't been for that Scottish thing, and the group might have well faltered at that point if Andrea and I had graduated in '93, but I stayed on for the extra year. The spring of '92 was when Sam and I decided we wanted to become Archdruids. '92, '93 - I can't figure out which one it was because they were almost identical years in my mind, because in the spring of both years I'd decided to become Archdruid in different ways. In spring of '92 I decided to become Archdruid just by staying up all night and saying I was Archdruid, which was the way things ran.

EH: Do you mean Archdruid, or do you mean Third Order?

MS: I didn't really think there was much difference, because no one had done vigils in a long time. In the spring of '92, Sam and I went into the little grove, where we had met in the spring of '90, and we decided to just vigil on our own, independently, and declare ourselves third order. And we did this. And it was about that time, the spring of '92, that I began doing my research into the Druids, which came to fruition in the spring of '93, one year later, when I sent out a questionnaire in February of '93, asking for information from other Druids on the past history. I wanted to try to reconstruct Druidism at that point. Because I saw that Druidism under purely Wiccan interests had fallen flat in the spring of '92. And by the spring of '93, Andrea was about ready to graduate, and the whole thing had gone flat. So I decided to try to essentially bring back old Druidism, see if that might help things. So during '92 to '93, considering myself a third-order, I started getting more involved in Druid activities.

The first ritual that I officially ever held was spring of '92, when I led a Beltane ritual on Mai Fete Island, with Sam Adams, Andrea Davis, Sam Adams, Heather Gurenberg, and Alex Stewart being present. I used part of the liturgy of the old druids at that time, because there was just enough stuff in Issac's *Druid Chronicles*, and then the Carleton clippings of old newspaper articles for me to get a feel of the old Druids. But it was half-Wiccan, half old Druid at that time. Basically, we went around the lake in quarters. The first quarter was earth, the second quarter was fire, the third was water, and the fourth quarter we swam across to the island and was air. I wasn't being pretty true to the Wiccan four-towers thing, but I was doing it my own way. What really was interesting was not the ritual but what happened there in the night, when I had the great dream. It's written up in the book of the *Dead Lake Scrolls*, which I wrote. Basically, I had this weird dream where I was back in Scotland on the island of Erin, and there was a big bus group of people moving up this mountain, and it was very slippery and hard to walk on. And everything was

in greys, except the rain, which was yellow. The bus stopped, and it was all my friends from Social Mecca [note: the dorm room of Curtis Mitchell & Kareem Kazkaz, a noted social center] and the cloak people, and I got on board there, and went to a place, and got off, and wasn't looking, and a bus hit me, and I slid under the car and banged my head on the universal joint of the car, and when I got up it was still heavily raining and very muddy, and there was this house with a yellow window, glowing against the darkness.

And I went inside, and all the people were there again, had gotten off the bus and were waiting for me, and a man came out who was completely covered in red boar fir, with bristles all over, and he had the same face as one of the druids I met over on the Isle of Arann. He had blue eyes, and he told me "Now you are one of us." And it was about that time that I woke up in the morning. It was a very strange kind of dream. And I kind of considered that my initiation into the Third Order to the full extent, that May of '92. And during my research of '92 - '93, I got enough materials to understand the old Druids, but I still didn't really understand what was different about them from what we were in the renaissance period of Druidism. And the questionnaire was my attempt to find out who were the Druids of the old time. And what I found out in that period radically changed Druidism at Carleton: it gave them a greater sense of history, and changed my complete idea of everything I held religiously. And we'll have to hold on to that until I'm interviewed tomorrow, when we'll do the second part of this interview.

EH: Sounds good. Thanks.

[Tape 2, side A]

EH: Okay, the date is now August 30th, 1996, and Michael Scharding and Eric Hilleman are continuing with an interview begun three days ago. We were talking about the history of the Carleton Druids during Michael Scharding's tenure at Carleton, and Michael, you had begun talking about how you had begun doing research into the history of Carleton Druidism, and I wanted to ask you about the fruits of that research, why you did it, and what kind of things you learned from it.

MS: Well, my major at Carleton was a History major, and I've always been kind of a person who would join lost causes and try to revive them. And what better group to try to revive than a group that's been dead for twelve or fourteen years? Officially, because by '93...well, maybe not twelve years, but '84 was the real drop in the older ways had happened. The renaissance of Druidism had begun in '86 with a different angle. So I wanted to revive as much as I could the pre-1984 Druidism, and to do that I needed to do research. Basically, I began with the Archives, which had not much more than a copy of Isaac Bonewits' Druid Chronicles Evolved, the original Druid Chronicles, part of the black book, and maybe about a couple dozen letters from the '60s and '70s. And from that I was able to get a bunch of names, and eventually I ran into Richard Shelton and David Frangquist and a couple other people, who were distressed to find out that the blue book of the Archives, which was the book of documents handed down from Archdruid to Archdruid, had disappeared. So they helped me to reconstruct the blue book, essentially, and do my other research.

The reason I did the research for the Druid Archives was to provide primary material for my Comps project, a

comprehensive exercise project for the history major. I was going to do a history of the Carleton Druids, a project that caused me no end of trouble. Six or seven major revisions, and I think they just let me go because they were tired of me revising it. But one of the things I found out about the older Druids is that they had a much more lackadaisical attitude toward ritual, which I already did, because I had never really enjoyed the rituals that much, I just enjoyed being with the people. They had a philosophical bent about what the whole purpose of religion was and whether or not ritual was helpful towards religion, a topic that didn't come up too often in the post-'84 Druidism at Carleton, and it was a subject that fascinated me, so... I would say that one of the fascinating elements of researching the Druids would be the aspect of religion as being a method of rebellion. One of the problems that I had with post-'84 Druidism was that they were choosing a religion that was being persecuted, probably on purpose in some ways, but also because they thought it was closest to their heart. But they had already accepted the idea of religion, in some ways, because neo-paganism and Wicca and Native American beliefs are religions, in and of themselves. It had become somber, joyless and too serious. And they had given up the whole debate of "What was religion?" And the whole idea of what separates philosophy and religion for me has always been a very thin line, and I've always kind of straddled it back and forth. And these are the issues that the older Druids were constantly writing about, especially during the Isaac Affairs of the '74-'76 period, when Isaac was becoming extremely serious in his Druidism and trying to turn it into a religion, versus a mode of outlook upon religion.

Basically, when I finished my studies I introduced a greater amount of silliness, play, and meditation to my services, which I began to hold in the earlier style, on a more frequent basis. They weren't well received by most Druids, but then most Druids don't generally show up too often anyway. Usually two or three would show up for the weekly rituals, which I reintroduced for a while. The vagueness of the rituals was what I liked the best. If you weren't paying close attention, you might not quite understand what happened - it's like you blinked, and suddenly the ritual's over with. And I thought that was kind of a fun thing to do, because if you hold it in a particularly beautiful location, the people who are attending the ritual might be distracted enough by the trees that by the time they came back the ritual was over. I don't know, I kind of liked that. It's there and gone, and you don't have to worry about it. You can get on with looking at the trees and stuff, which I think is more important than the actual speaking of the words. At my rituals I decided to collect more meditations, and I started to write more personal histories of the recent years, like in the Dead Lake Scrolls, and collected books of poetry, and stuff for materials, most of which never were used, but I was just trying to produce more thoughtful material for possible future Archdruids.

I also made the International Druid Archives larger than the Carleton scope, originally because I thought there was a greater connection between the different groups and Carleton's Reformed Druids, until I realized that the Carleton Druids are pretty much unique in the world, and that the Celtic connections are pretty superficial, and that the only thing that connects these groups, besides the name "Druid," is possibly the use of a couple of visual images of Celticness, a tendency towards anarchy and collapse, and possibly also the...any time you have a Druid group, you pretty much have people who are looking for answers, and I figure since we're

all looking towards the earth mother, we'll probably get most of the same answers, even if they are taking the ancient Celtic part a little bit too seriously. But several Celtically-oriented pagan groups have spun off from the Reformed Druids, notably Ar nDraiocht Fein and the Henge of Keltria. And since I didn't think they would get any kind of stable archive of their own, and I kind of think of them as grandchildren of the Reform, I decided to include the material into the Druid Archives. Which may prove to be helpful to the Reformed Druids in some way, as an additional reservoir of nature-oriented poetry, meditations and liturgies to work off of in the future. Plus, with the Keltria group, they're up in the Twin Cities, and they can come down and join us, or we can go join them, so I thought it would be useful for them to have access to their records. Just kind of networking groups together.

But it's kind of hard to describe how my Druidism at Carleton changed, because it was a very gradual thing. Some of it is covered in my diary, my seven-year diary that I've had since I lived here, but basically Carleton is a very special time when you can work out a lot of your questions in a relatively supportive environment that you might not have another opportunity of. You have several people who are in a similar stage of their lives, and who are willing to ask the same questions and give you honest answers in a way that, well, perhaps people become more experienced as they get aged, and I don't know that experience can be translated in words...It has to be experienced, I believe. But I know that the 18 -21 age is, religiously speaking, probably the most crucial in deciding one's future religious lifestyle. Either you abandon it, you get more conservative, or you learn more about it than you ever believed possible. There's one proverb I remember, and I was thinking about the difference between religion and philosophy, that a religion destroys evil, but a morality merely covers it. I'll let you think about that one. But I think there's a certain something about religion that's one step above a philosophy, whereas a philosophy might have a logical basis to it, or it's more argument-based. There's an element of faith which does not completely exist within philosophy, and that's why I think Druidism kind of bounces back and forth. Philosophy doesn't have the same amount of ritual that religion does, but it's easier to understand philosophy for the hard-minded mind. But occasionally the mind needs to take a vacation - I think that's where religion comes in. But basically, my '93 - '94 school year was spent having a large number of rituals: the weekly rituals I've already mentioned, the nearly monthly sweat lodges, as much as I could. I got the Druid's Notes Conference up and running again, where people could post notes and talk to each other, outside of the ritual time period. I tried to introduce weekly meetings of meditative readings, and stuff like that. I tried to network with people, give them addresses of different groups, and societies outside of Carleton which they might wish to contact. I essentially tried to do everything to make it easier for people to become Druids, sometimes neglecting my own Druidism by being too busy. My own form of Druidism was essentially talking to people, I think much more than doing rituals. Talking to people, and walking by myself in the Arboretum at night were, I think, the two backbones of my Druidism.

The way I have tried to be remembered for my Carleton Druidism is mostly through literature, which is amusing because I consider myself a little bit anti-dogmatic - I make fun of scriptures as much as I can, and to leave behind a 500-page tome of scriptures seems a little bit hypocritical, in a way. But I've collected this collection called A Reformed

Druid Anthology, which I'll be publishing tomorrow. Partly as a scholarly tool, for other researchers. I'm producing 30 copies - about ten will be distributed to libraries across the country, about ten will be distributed to friends, and then I'll hold on to the other copies. This will be downloadable off the Internet, on our website. And I kind of hope that people will decide to write histories on their neo-pagan organizations, to provide useful material for religion majors and other people doing research on the newer religions. Especially in an age where Fundamentalism and other Christian religions seem to be surging ahead, I think it's necessary for more people to be doing research on the fringes of the religious movements, which are often the people who are rebelling against the mainstream religions, in a way. And I kind of hope that my book will encourage other people to research this area of theology. And this collection I've made, it has a study guide, it has the original Druid Chronicles, it has the Apocrypha, which has selected letters over the last 34 years from various Druids, on what Druidism is to them. It has a lot of rituals from the older days, a variety. It has various trivia and customs, it has some books on the Hasidic Druids of St. Louis, who are now extinct, and an increased and enlarged collections of meditations, miscellany, my history comps, and various publications that I've put out over the years. Since I won't be here over the next few years, I've decided to leave this behind as a kind of a very long epistle to future Archdruids and various Druids here at Carleton. My hope is that they will realize that most of it is self-deprecating, and that the underlying message is that 'these are the kind of materials you can collect over the years if you continue your Druidism' and not to use this book as a strict guideline or strict handbook of Druidism, but more of an example of what Druidism has done for me over the years, and that the sheer creativity that it can produce from one Druid might be an example for them on how it can affect their lives. It will also give them a sense of continuity over the years, with the past Druids, which I think is important.

There are lots of alumni who have gone through the same problems that you have, and that Carleton has deeply changed their lifestyles. And you can have a connection with these older Druids - just write letters to them, and ask how, over the last 30 years, your Druidism has changed. And for me, seeing how the Druids have changed after graduation has been perhaps the greatest benefit. Because I've seen how the ritual has fallen away, and how the lifestyle changes that they undertook have been the most lasting contribution of Druidism to them. And Druidism for me has pretty much been synonymous with Carleton's educational basis: the constant asking of questions, the unwillingness to accept simple answers, the continual search for academic and religious truth, seem pretty close in my mind. The need to involve other people in this quest is important, also. The 'no man is an island' concept is important for the Druids, because without the other Druids, I would have never gotten to this stage, and that has to be remembered and respected. It is possible to be quite a good Druid by yourself, but I'm sure other people have gone through the same steps you have and can leave a trail for you to follow, or at least, what kind of tools will be useful in your quest. And I've noticed that many of the Druids over the years have returned to their original religion, but they still have that element of Druidism in their minds, which is comforting to me to know that one can reconcile one's beliefs with Druidism on a stable basis throughout one's life - there's always an opportunity for return.

EH: I was wondering if you wanted to say anything at all about the things that you did to mark the 30th anniversary of the Druids.

MS: Richard Shelton came down for that. Basically, for the 30th anniversary, we held a ritual on the Hill of Three Oaks and the Little Grove. Richard Shelton came down to hold a service. That period - that was May of '93, and April of '93 we had a run-in with some anti-Druids who broke up one of our rituals, but I don't think they understood that we were actually having a service. But thinking back on that period, I don't think I acted as well as I could have for that situation. Instead of being calm and collected, I got nervous and paranoid, which probably affected me more than them. Getting worked up about such things - and it was a trivial thing - was very un-Druidic of me, I would think. But it did kick off a huge surge of interest in my research, sort of a search for validity, which Druidism will never supply. Druidism is not in the habit of giving official credentials, and such. It's too much of a rebellious organization to ever... Well, every time someone searches for validity in their beliefs, they might find a couple people who agree with them. But basically, you have to just be yourself and change what you know to be wrong, and stand by what you believe in. No one else can give that to you. I'm sure you've heard that a hundred times before, but it's true. The 30th Anniversary was my attempt to connect with the past of Druidism, to tell all the other Druids that yes, we've been here a very long time, and other people have done the same things that you have done in your search for religious truth, and you're part of a longer struggle that not only have people in the past helped you, but you also have an obligation to provide the resources and support to future Druids at Carleton. Something that I really think is the basis of the third order.

The third order originated with Frangquist asking David Fisher in 1964 to take over the Druid organization, and Fisher had decided by the spring of '64 that he was going on to the Episcopal seminary. And the group was nearing its objective of getting the chapel requirement removed. Fisher did not really like the idea of it continuing onward, but Frangquist thought that the search for religious truth was too important to the various Druids at Carleton to just let it die and leave people to their own devices. Not that he felt that he was the only one who could help these people, but he was a way, a possibility, an opportunity, and that it was his duty to help other people as much as he could who came to him for help. The Druids have never been a proselytizing organization. Sure we show up at activities fair at the beginning of Fall term and put out a membership list, but when people fall away from the organization, if that's the right term, we accept that, and just go on with the people who decided to continue on with us. I really doubt that anyone can graduate from Carleton without becoming a little bit of a Druid. But Frangquist started of the third order...essentially, it's your duty to provide counseling when asked questions, to provide opportunities of religious introspection for people who don't know how to hold services; to offer tips of meditation to those who need to learn about it - you're essentially becoming a resource for other people to work with, a resource that is without affiliation to any particular religion, a neutral party.

There aren't very many neutral religious organizations. I mean the Unitarians come kinda close, but they're still in the Christian camp. And the people who are just completely wandering around, there needs to be a person they can ask questions to. Of course, one of the problems that the

Archdruids have is that they don't really have answers. They just have more questions to give to the person who's asking questions, which can be very disheartening to people seeking a simple, strict organization, a belief to believe in. But if they understand that the religious search is merely an endless stream of questions, then we can provide that service to them. That's pretty much the third order.

EH: Why don't we go now to the period after you graduated and you continued to maintain ongoing contacts with the Druids at Carleton. What's the state of Druidism at Carleton now, and what have your connections with it been?

MS: Well, I ordained Becky Hrobak as my successor, and then she took up Anne Graham and Michelle Curtis as her co-Archdruids in the spring of '94. The '94 - '96 period, they held frequent rituals, mostly of the Wiccan variety, which Becky didn't like that much because she's not into ritual - she's kind of like me in that respect. She's more into the meditative aspect, and her favorite activity was having tea parties where people read poetry and drank tea. Or taking Arb walks. That was one of the things I liked doing a lot. But Anne and Michelle are more into the organized ritual aspects of religious life, and they did a pretty good job of organizing things like that. They're also good about providing access to resources of the neo-pagan genre. I think they did a pretty good job, because you don't have a lot of time at Carleton to devote to activity: there's only so many hours you can do and still get a decent GPA. I usually spent a good eight or ten hours a week, at least, of serious Druidic activity or research, possibly much more than that. My grades suffered as a result. You have to be extremely dedicated to do something like that, day in and day out. And after about two years, they were tired of this.

[Tape 2, Side B]

MS: They didn't have the sheer resources of time that I allowed myself. Considering that, I think they kept the group pretty active. It didn't grow too much, but at least it was maintaining itself. They were sophomores when they came into their Archdruidcy, so they were relatively young. It is my opinion that seniors should not be Archdruids, if it can at all be helped. Because Comps tend to take up too much of their time to be an effective Archdruid. But they did find their successors, which is the important thing for the Archdruid to do. They found Irony Sade and Michelle Hajder, who we ordained in spring of '96 to be next year's Archdruids. I've written about them in the book of Vigils, so you're welcome to read that. They're in the Dead Lake Scrolls. But I think that they are the first Archdruids to be in charge of an official Druid organization. The first 33 years of the Reformed Druid history, we were an unofficial student organization. In the spring of '95 or '96, I don't remember, Becky, Anne, and Michelle got the Druids to become an official student organization, with funding and everything.

Now this is very helpful for financial purposes, but for secrecy purposes it kind of puts a wet blanket upon the Druids, because all our records and membership lists are now available for perusal. And there are some hoops you have to jump through as an official organization, which take up more of the Archdruid's time, which should really be spent with the other Druids as much as possible. Here you've got money, which allows you to do more activities, but here you also have more paperwork, and you have to be more careful that you don't do anything that will offend the college, or you

can get your funding revoked. So it hampers the kind of activities you can have, it takes up the Archdruid's time, and it makes you an official part of the college, which affects the whole basis of your organization. If you're constantly on the outside of the group, the group being the college, you can get away with all sorts of stuff and fight against rigidity of beliefs and the status quo and stuff like that, but when you're actually part of it, you have a tendency to support that organization. And while I am very supportive off the college in many ways, I kind of think that the Druids need to be there on the fringes, rather than in the limelight. To correct the organization in ways that only an outsider can really do. I really hope that Michelle and Irony don't get too absorbed in the specifics and legalities and continue to have a thriving organization, meeting in the Arboretum and talking to each other and stuff like that, and don't get wrapped up in college politics too much. But it's kind of nice to see that the group has continued on, after me. Michelle and Irony are my great-grandchildren, in the Reformed sense. Or great grand-brothers and -sisters. I don't know if that works. But it's just nice to see what one has done has lived after one, and I suspect it will continue on for another three or four years before the next major crisis will happen.

EH: Okay, is there anything else you want to say to the Druids?

MS: Good luck!

EH: You've been doing some other interesting things apart from Druidic things. Since your graduation you've been involved in a number of projects - I wondered if you wanted to say something about those.

MS: Well, the Carleton Druids were a religious rebellion of mine, but there were other kinds of things that I was trying to do. Now you mustn't get the idea that I was some kind of wild-eyed revolutionary person running around, picketing places. I prefer to do my kind of Reforming more casually, kind of picking away at the rock versus swinging sledgehammers. One of the other groups that I started at Carleton was the Mystery Science Theater 3000 organization. The Science Fiction Club at Carleton had become more and more quality-oriented and film-watching. The original Science Fiction Club, which started I think in '87, was essentially watching Dr. Who and old Star Trek episodes. And that only took up two hours of your Saturday afternoon, which left you three or four more hours to socialize. That started forming a nucleus which eventually became the Dr. Who club, which became the Science Fiction Alliance. That was a lot of fun. Got lots of people together, talking and discussing various science fiction topics, listening to folk music, like Mark Heiman's singing, which got me into Druidism, and was generally just a good thing. People didn't watch much TV at all back then. For us, watching two hours a week was kind of scandalous, at least in the eyes of the college. And over the last three or four years, there's been an explosion of various science-fiction series on TV, and there's just a glut of viewing activities now being performed by the Science Fiction Alliance at Carleton, to the point where there's so much new stuff on that you have to be quiet so people can hear it for the first time correctly. In the old days, of course, everyone had seen it already two or three times, so it was no big deal if you started talking to your neighbor and making fun of the series or chatting or socializing. Now you have to sit there quietly in a room with sixty other people and then as soon as it's over you have two minutes to talk, and then -boom- there's another series on the TV. It's just not very good for building a community. It's more of a communal... I don't know, it's like being alone in this group of 60 people watching the same program. It's not

like the older days. It reminds me a lot of my younger Catholic services, where you sit put and just listen passively.

So three years ago, in the spring of '93, Mark and I founded the Mystery Science Theater 3000 club at Carleton. MST is a business from Minnesota that would take old movies and stick three comedians in the lower right corner of the screen. And they would constantly make fun of these movies that were so abysmally bad that you could hardly bear sitting through them. And somehow by adding humor to it, or just completely destroying them, I think one becomes aware of how many science fiction movies and stuff like that are actually quite good. So we came up with the idea that if we showed really terrible MST movies to the Science Fiction Community here at Carleton, they would stop bitching and moaning about how awful the last Next Generation episode was, and they might actually start appreciating how much better it actually was than 'Manos, the Hands of Fate' or 'Earth vs. the Spider' or these really crappy movies, or that people would take a more positive attitude in their critiques, versus saying 'oh, that wasn't the best thing possible.' Which is, I think, becoming more and more a way that the American public is seeing it as. They have such a fascination with perfection that when something fails to meet it they tear it apart, whereas they don't realize all the good qualities of it. I think by subjecting yourself to what is a *really* terrible movie, you will appreciate the better qualities of the recent materials that are now available. And appreciating what you have, that's what it's all about. Mark and I also formed the Bagpipe Association at Carleton, where we sneak around in the Arboretum at one o'clock in the morning to serenade the students who are still up working. Bagpiping is very similar to the MST3K concept, in that bagpipe is pretty horrible music to listen to, and it makes you appreciate the quiet tinkly music of classical concerts, and stuff like that. The MST3K society is kind of moribund, it kind of collapsed after two or three successors; there really wasn't anyone who was interested in watching those movies any more than they already had. They'd seen them all, and they didn't want to see them again. And so it's kind of collapsed. It might power up again in a couple of years, but...

Back in the spring of '94, Mark and I started the Half-Dozen Eggs film production company. Similar to the MST concept, we wanted to make a really bad movie, because here we had been criticizing all these really terrible movies in Mystery Science Theater, and yet, we ourselves were guilty of not appreciating how good those movies were, because we said, 'oh, I could make a better movie than that.' That kind of comment comes up. Well, we decided to put our money where our mouth was, and we failed! We made a terrible movie. The first one was called "A Prisoner" which was supposedly a predecessor to the Prisoner series, the British science fiction series where a retiring spy is taken to a prison and they try to drain some information out of him, and he resists, and he tries to escape, every episode, and fails. Kind of a depressing series in that way. It was the first action series where the hero loses every episode. Which we find kind of amusing. So we made a prequel to that film, and it didn't turn out very well; it was not very well made.

But in the Spring of '95, we decided to move from the science fiction genre to the Barbarian fantasy genre, mainly because it's cheaper to make a really good barbarian film than to make a really lousy science fiction film. Because all you need is a bunch of fur and a sword, and you can make a good barbarian movie. And this was called 'Gator,' based on the movie 'Ator the Fighting Eagle,' so ours was 'Gator the

Fighting Rabbit.' It was a pastiche of 30 or so barbarian movies that I had seen over that spring. Most of the actors and crew were Druidic sorts of people from Carleton, with that quirky sense of humor. The trick of writing a really good comedy is not to write a comedy, but to try really hard to make it serious, and then to fail. It's kind of like Douglas Adams saying that the way to learn how to fly is to throw yourself really hard at the ground and miss. It's a very similar concept.

I had an underlying idea for these two movies, in that Carleton to me has a kind of mystical, mythological landscape, and I always had one foot on the other side, mythologically speaking, while I was here. Every building had all kinds of stories and legends to me, from the friends I've heard talk about what they did there, and everything like that. But I thought it would be really interesting to try to impose a completely alien idea of the college, Carleton College actually being a science fiction scene or set where people were having their brains wiped, or something like that. Or turn it into a barbarian landscape full of monuments and beautiful maidens and bad action sequences. So I extensively used the features of my beloved Carleton in my movies; kind of making a monument of my love to her.

And the last one we've made is Drake's 7, which is another science fiction series but much higher budgeted, based on the old Flash Gordon serials of ten-minute episodes. And to a degree I think these film projects also filled a gap or a void in the Science Fiction Alliance here at Carleton, because over the years there's been less and less interaction between the members of the Science Fiction Alliance. And so what we did with our movies over the last few years, was since a lot of the Science Fiction people hang around over the summer, we put them into movies. And so when you're on the set for five or six straight hours and you only have to say one line, you tend to try to find something else to do. And this is usually where you start making friendships with people, and building a common experience to work upon. And these film projects are a way of getting the Science Fiction Society involved in the more creative aspect of producing science fiction, and not just watching it. And also hopefully to encourage them to comment and write materials on other forms of science fiction beyond the visual formats.

And like the Druids, I've funded various books and projects for the science fiction library as well, stuff like that. And I feel as an alumnus that rather than giving the college a check to work with as they feel, I'd rather target certain groups that I think are important to the college's welfare and make sure that they have all the money that they need. Well, not all the money that they want, but the money that I think they need for certain projects, and so I've directed my contributions to these groups - the druids, the science fiction society, the MST3K group, and the Bagpipe society. Mark Heiman and I together have pretty much been the backbone of these organizations, behind the scenes. The other organization that I think is really important for me is Pickin' & Grinnin', because this is a group that meets Wednesday nights to do folksinging. And one of the unfortunate side effects of mass-production of music is that instead of ...like in the old days, when you wanted to have a dance, you had to find a band to play for you. Now you can just stick a CD or a tape into there and have a perfect performance for your enjoyment pleasure. This leads to more jaded behavior, 'oh, why should I get this crappy band when I can get this beautiful performance by these world-reknowned people who everybody knows?' This is a lack of creativity on their part,

because there are certain things that a live band can do that a canned band cannot do. You can't make requests, you can't ask them to do something special. This is part of an aspect of society that is happy with prepackaged religion, prepackaged music, and all these other things. And Pickin' & Grinnin' is where you make your own music, you make your own harmonies, you pick your own songs, you modify the songs, and you play instruments with them. And this kind of self-sufficient attitude toward entertainment I think is very healthy for a student to go through while at Carleton. To realize that there's very little that they can sell you that you can't do for yourself, if you really wanted to.

And this applies towards religion, and entertainment, education to a great degree, and almost everything. The last two or three years I've been getting into a more Spartan existence, as much as I can, mainly because I realize that if you don't want your possessions, they will eventually take control of your life. And after you're dead, of course, your possessions live on after you, but of course that's not who I am, I'm not my possessions, it's the friendships that I've built and the ideas that I've done. And that's more important than who's the richest person in the cemetery or who has the most stuff to give away when they're dead? Well, I think you should be working on that throughout your life, giving away possessions and stuff like that. I guess that's just the main thing about the Druids and everybody is trying to teach self-sufficiency and self-confidence, self-reliance and innovative ideas and how to do things in ways that other people have not done before and are better suited to the situation. To be adaptive in all aspects of life. To challenge myself even further than this, I am going to Japan in five or six days. I am going to abandon most of my official responsibilities as a Reformed Druid for a couple years.

Well, I take that back. I'll probably get questions about religion, and though they won't know I'm a Druid, I'll probably try to give them good advice. I call this "guerilla Druidism." So I guess I'm not officially abandoning my responsibilities, but I'm not going to be going around, starting a grove or anything, for a couple years. But basically I'm going to try to live as cheaply as possible in Japan, which is not easy to do. I'm going to be learning a new language, a new career, and I'm going to have to learn how to do my own entertainment because I won't understand theirs. I'm essentially trying to learn a new lifestyle, and how to adapt to it. Because most of what I know about the American lifestyle has become second nature. I don't know how I learned it in the first place. And I think to become a better adaptive and creative person, to go through it again as an adult, consciously, as you go through it, I think will be a great way of building up tools and resources for future endeavors of mine. New ways of thinking, new ways of organizing people, new ways of learning, new ways of religion. It's just a massive attempt of mine to learn new tools, I guess new Druidic tools, towards life. They say you grow a new soul when you learn a new language. There's also a little bit of - oh, what do you call it - reliving the past here, because I know that Frangquist went to Japan right before he came back with a really heavy-duty Druidism. I suspect he went through many of the same things that I'm going there for. He probably had to learn all sorts of new adaptive and creative ways of thinking and doing things, and then he brought these back to Druidism. I hope that Japan will do this for me also.

EH: Good luck with that, and is there anything else you wanted to say, or are we wrapped up?

Interview with Irony Sade

Subject: Irony Sade [IS]

Interviewer: Eric Hilleman [EH]

Date: April 21, 2001

Transcriber: Dan Brooks, Leona Kwon (12.10.02)

Tapes: 2

MS: I would recommend to people that every morning when they wake up, realize what a great opportunity they have here at Carleton. I've been here since 1989, off and on, and though there were probably days when I didn't think about it, hardly a day has gone by when I did not appreciate the opportunity I had here to talk with people. Do not pay too much attention to the classes - most people never look at your grades in any individual class. Take classes that you'd never take, maybe just pick one randomly. Everything you've learned here will be useful somewhere along the way. Try not to take classes just purely for credit purposes, to get a good grade because you already know the stuff. There's opportunity for dawdling in life, don't do it now. Spend as much time as you can talking with people, I don't think the term networking is appropriate, but just understanding different people who are working in different fields who come from different backgrounds as possible, join as many organizations as you can, perhaps in succession, one after the other, until you can understand how they work. Because you'll never have this quality of openness and access to different types of groups and organizations that you have now. Everything after this gets much more difficult to break into the cliques in the organizations.

Here you have an opportunity to explore all the different types of groups that later appear in society, in a raw state, where there are fewer things hidden from you than there will be in the other forms that exist outside of Carleton College. And try to use whatever opportunities are available for you. I mean it's nice to do the minimum amount of work here. But do independent studies, if you can, do independent research. Ask for advice from the professors: don't underestimate this resource. These are people who've made it their life's quest to teach people and to offer them tools of learning. And most of them are delighted to have people ask them for advice. And after you graduate make sure that you contribute, as past alumni have contributed, to others academic search. Provide access for people who are looking for jobs, give them tips, provide money for certain projects that you hear about that you like. Provide services if they ask for them, or offer your services for certain projects of theirs, and help recruit people that you think are useful for Carleton's future. And never finish your studies. Don't think that you've learned it all, because you haven't. And I wish you all the best of luck.

EH: Thank you.



Figure 8 Frangquist bestowing 6th Ordination on Mike at Samhain 1993 on the Hill of 3 Oaks.



Begin Tape I, Side A

EH: This tape is being recorded for the Carleton Oral History Program. The date is May 11th, 1999. The interviewee in this interview is Irony Sade, a Carleton senior currently. And doing the interviewing is Eric Hilleman. Irony, let's talk a bit about first your own background and anything you want to say about yourself prior to coming to Carleton, and then how you got interested in Carleton and came here.

IS: Alright, I was born in up-state New York, 22 years ago, I suppose. My parents, both professors, one of anthropology, the other biology, and lived between a small town in New York and suburban Chicago back and forth till high school and moved to New York permanently. Came to Carleton, umm, not entirely sure why. It sounded like it was more forgiving of uniqueness than many places, and it was a long way from home, both of which I wanted.

EH: Um, did you visit it before?

IS: I did visit it, once. I'm trying to remember if I was already accepted at that point. I applied early admission, and then didn't actually complete applications for anywhere else. I got into a panic towards the beginning of February and started applying to Cornell just in case, but once Carleton accepted me they apparently told Cornell before they even told me. And I got a letter from them saying, "I'm sorry, you've been accepted somewhere else. We can't handle your application." (chuckle)

EH: Okay, you say forgiving of uniqueness, and that was important to you. Why was it important to you?

IS: Because my high school was not forgiving of uniqueness. And while, I was not willing to conform it meant that I had, perhaps, four friends, over the four years I was there. And that was ok because I kept to myself most of the time, but coming to a new place, I also wanted to be able to be more of who I was without that restriction and without that image in the collective mind of who I already was.

EH: Since this tape is going to talk largely about your relationship to the Carleton Druids, I think I want to ask you about your religious background, if any.

IS: Yeah, (chuckle). (pause) My parents wanted us, my brother and I, to make up our own minds about religion. And as such tried to expose us to everything, but not ever...but wouldn't ever say this is the way that things are. 'Till I was about sixteen I really didn't think about it much, I remember in fourth grade once deciding that since nobody else currently believed in the old Norse gods I would, just because they ought to be believed in, or they might die. (chuckle) But that was never anything serious. I went to a Presbyterian church, my grandmother's church for holidays and on occasion when I felt like it. I was in the choir for a while there, but had no real religious thoughts until I was about sixteen, then I suffered an accident that made me think, and from that point on, started really looking into what Religion was, what God might be, what Truth was, who I was. Just asking all the really big religious questions, and then I started seeking out people who seemed to know and talking to them. Found a prayer group in my high school and joined that, clashed greatly with many of the Christians there, but found a lady who's faith was strong enough, that she would really talk, and she would really answer the hard kinda blunt questions I'd ask. And I learned an awful lot from her, so, I didn't have any...I didn't have any religious training or (pause) I don't know. Experience is the wrong word for it, but I didn't have any background, but I did have thoughts and investigations, I don't know. My family's been religious from way back. My grandfather was a Mullah [spelling?] in Kurdistan and he was the first person on that side of the family to become Christian and passed that onto his son perhaps too strongly. My grandfather used to go to church, sit ramrod straight in the front rows, sing through all the choir pieces, and then turn off his hearing aids when the sermon started. My father, himself, never speaks about religion. Mom was raised pseudo-Catholic, I think, but not really. Very little influence from my family that way, except encouragement to make up my own mind.

EH: Ok, um, have you been satisfied with having chosen Carleton?

IS: Yeah, very much. I agree with Michael ['Mec'] Scharding that it should be required that people take a year off between their sophomore and junior years. But I would definitely come back. I'm sorry to be leaving, but it is getting toward time to go.

EH: Well tell me some things, really anything you want about your Carleton experience, but I'm particularly interested in how you got involved with the Druids. Did you know about the Druids before you came to Carleton?

IS: The person who gave the tour that I came on, over the summer of '95 I guess it was that I came here, mentioned something in passing about the cloak people. And so when I had my sort of interview on campus, I think it was with Dean Govoni, and I asked him, "so who are these cloak people?" And he started laughing and got this "Oh dear, how do I explain this" expression and mentioned that there was a druid group and I looked through the Algol at that point and saw who they were. They looked like neat people, and I think, promptly forgot about it during the intervening summer.

I don't really remember how I actually met the group when I got here. I remember that it was very small, and I remember going to one Druid tea, that Michelle Curtis and Annie had. And I remember being a little bit leery of it, and just kinda, "What's this about?" asking them kinda questions. "What do

you mean by these orders? You say that they confer different things. Do they confer what, powers, responsibilities?" You know "what is this about?" And not getting very far with the answers, but I also met Michelle Hajder at some point in there and she'd gotten involved with the Druids. But the first memorable experience with them was a sweat lodge in the lower Arb that was mostly alumni. I don't believe Mec was there but Andrea Davis was. Joe (pause) Banks? I think was and Annie and Michelle both were, Michelle Curtis and Hajder for that matter. Umm, I don't remember how I got involved with it, but that was the one that security busted twice (chuckle).

And oh Rodelt [unclear] rode that story out long ago but that was my first intriguing experience and after that knew I was staying, I guess. By that time also Michelle and I had gotten to be friends and had independently come to the conclusion that the Druids were a neat thing. It was really amazing that a religion had actually started here, if they were going to call it a religion. And that as there were only two people left, both of whom were leaving the next year, and neither of us really wanted to see the group die out, so I can't really speak much for her, but I didn't know much about its history or anything about what I was getting into but decided I didn't want to see it die. So volunteered or ran away slowest I guess and said I would try to organize things next year, and it just sort of accumulated from there.

EH: What about the group appealed to you and made you want to not see it die?

IS: Mmm, innate sympathy for the underdog... I liked the things they talk about, I liked the anything-goes attitude towards questioning but I also saw in it potential for some very serious inquiry into nature and knowledge and what life meant. (pause) I was impressed by the people in it, particularly Andrea, and Mec was around at some point during that first year because he was gone by my second, so I did know him then. (Sigh) I don't really know why beyond that. I'd looked into some of the prayer groups here and had found them interesting but sort of exclusive and the Druids were willing to talk about anything and look into anything and that's what I needed at that point.

EH: Exclusive in terms of just a group of friends who wanted to be in an exclusive group of friends or exclusive in terms of religious orientation?

IS: No, not socially exclusive, for the most part. There was a little bit of that, but I think that is just the nature of groups at Carleton because everything's so intense. But there was a Bible-study group I remember where it was literally that, a Bible-study group. And any other opinions, any other texts, any other readings that you brought in were duly and carefully considered, but (pause) made things acutely uncomfortable I suppose. And I remember at one point asking a lady who shall remain nameless some questions about it and she gave this very piercing look and said, "Have you studied philosophy here?" And I said, "No." Cause I hadn't then, and she said, "Oh, good. You're still pure." and went on with whatever she was talking about. But that made me hesitate towards exploring much that way.

EH: So (pause) Well, I want to get into what Druids did, both early on when you were just getting exposed to them and stuff. One, in what ways they're different than that in the sorts of things that they're talking about as well as just sort of the activities describing what goes on when the Druids get together. Tell me, to start with, about the security-busted sweat lodge.

IS: Okay. That was the only major activity that I saw during that first year here, besides the third order vigil that Michelle and I did. Um, the sweat lodge incident... I don't know the name of the island, or peninsula rather, but the sandbar in the lower Arb, this side of the river but sort of north of the stone pilings, there's a sandy spot in a little dell. Joe Banks and I built the sweat lodge there, I volunteered to help for some reason, and we built fire and somebody brought in saplings and we put up the sweat there and he and I just ended up sitting and talking for, must have been two hours, about a lot of Native American religion that he'd been involved with, about magic of different sorts, about what went on at Carleton, just about life mainly. And we talked about plants and different things and he said what he really wanted were some herbs to throw on the rocks and I said, "Well, what about catnip?" He said "Catnip would be great, do you know where some is?" So I ran off around Lyman and found what I had been told was catnip, turned out later it was lemon balm, which does something entirely different, but is still safe. So brought back a handkerchief full of that. Other people kept showing up and got dark and we were just about ready to strip down and head into the sweat when flashlights and security jumped out of the bushes and said, "What is this?! Who are you? Why are you have fires here? Are you camping? Do you have alcohol?" All three of which are illegal in the lower Arb. And we said yes we had a fire and no we're not camping, we're all ex-Carleton students at least and there's no alcohol at a sweat, that would be a very bad thing. And they took down names and asked that we put out the fire. One of them grabbed a bucket full of river water and was about to dash it onto the fire, [I] was trying to explain to him that throwing the bucket of water on red-hot stones was probably not the wisest course of action, and he wasn't listening, and Joe Banks said, "Sir, this is a religious ceremony. Would you let us put out the fire our way please?" And he was instantly, "Oh. Okay. Yeah that's fine." And I really, I don't know, really respected that somehow, a way of problem-solving I hadn't thought of. So Joe raked the rocks out of the fire, and then poured the water all over the coals and the wood and the ashes, and intoned some circle breaking charm and security told us not to do that again and left. Now we all took off our clothes, put the rocks in the lodge and had the sweat. (chuckle) Since we hadn't gotten the rocks wet. I had no idea how long the sweat lasted, but it was really dark and really cold when we came out. And I guess Mec must have been at that one, because he then lead a whole group of people down into the river to cool off for some reason. I was freezing as soon as I got out, so half the folks ran down to the river, and they other half grabbed whatever they could to wear, and I went and poked up the fire again because I was freezing. So the rest of us sort of clustered around the fire and then everybody else came up out of the river and we passed around soft mead and things and just general decompressing after the sweat and then decided it was time to go home. Took apart the lodge, and I started trying to put out the fire, and since there was a river there, I would grab one log, and heave it into the river. And it would spin through the air in flame and go down in hiss and security came running out of the bushes, stormed into the middle of the place, said, "Who has the fireworks?!" And everybody just sort of stared at them, tried to figure out what they meant and they were mad at us again for having the fire a second time and sort of ordered us all to leave, which was okay cause we were done by then. Made sure to put out the rest of the fire less dramatically, but that was definitely memorable. I continually wonder what would have happened if they'd come back either five minutes earlier or later, either of those times found

a dozen naked people sitting in a tent. (chuckle) I don't know. (pause) I did learn from that though for any future Druids reading this to make friends with security. Ask them, or at least keep them informed of some of your activities so that they are less likely to break them up.

EH: You mentioned your third order vigil, that was in your first year?

IS: That was my first year. That was um...Belting [?] night. The night of May 1st and of the spring concert and Michelle Hajder and I both vigiled then because... well Mec said that he didn't like third order vigils in the first year. I meant, no, Annie and Michelle Curtis, 'Michelle the Dark' he calls her, were both leaving and he wanted there to be some third orders left. So Michelle and I both vigiled that night, and it rained. Michelle had a fire vigil, and I did, uh, a walking vigil, the first one after Mec's I guess. And it rained all night.

EH: What's a walking vigil?

IS: A walking vigil is just like the fire vigil but you don't stay in one place, you walk out into the Arb after dark and stay awake and stay walking and just listen to world and listen to the woods and see what you learn. See the sorts of things that crawl out of your head, and see the sorts of entities that come out of the woods. And there's something about vigil nights that's just different. I don't know if things come out then that don't normally or it's just that people don't generally sit down and think for ten hours straight, or walk and think for ten hours straight. But, you learn a lot. I haven't, I don't know, I don't know what the fire vigil was like, I didn't do that then. I've done some since, but I think any vigil I do now is colored by the experience of that one.

EH: So it did what it was supposed to do to you, basically marked a watershed.

IS: It does. It marks a beginning, and it tests your commitment and it teaches you a lot. We've since picked up on that aspect and... well, because so much made sense during and immediately after my vigil and Michelle's, that we couldn't remember later and can't express now, because so much was lost in transition with nobody to tell it to, what we've started doing now is after people vigil they come back to the circle and talk, tell people what they've learned, or ask questions so that whatever they've learned is shared and spread and doesn't dissipate so quickly.

EH: So organizationally at that point, the Carleton Druids were down to very few people who were about to leave except for...

IS: except for Michelle and I...

EH: you and Michelle.

IS: Yeah, Michelle Curtis and Graham were the only two active druids still enrolled. Mec and Andrea were still active, but Andrea was in the cities, and I have no idea where Mec was at that point, except that he occasionally showed up. Michelle had become a second order druid sometime earlier in the year. I actually was never a first or second order druid, and they discovered this as they were trying to ordain me third. They went, "Wait!" And did some serious ad-libbing there and figured it would be okay. But organizationally the sweat happened because the alumni organized it, the vigils happened... I don't entirely know why because we wanted it they just happened. Other than that, weekly teas did happen then and (pause) granted I was not as involved with the group then, but I don't remember that anything else happened.

EH: The Tea's held outside somewhere in the natural Druid setting, or were they in a building?

IS: Depending. Um, then, the first one was in Ann's [?] room on third Goodhue. I remember another one being in Goodhue lounge. I remember one being held in the dining hall, but I don't actually remember any being held outdoors then. During my second year we started holding them in the Japanese garden when it was warm enough, and that went over really well, except that people had to keep running back and forth for water.

EH: So what do you do at them besides drink tea?...

IS: Drink tea...

EH: Is there discussion?

IS: There is discussion. Um, the better organized ones actually have discussion topics announced beforehand so people can bring in writings or ideas or whatever. We've done craft workshops where people built dreamcatchers or carved pumpkins or different things, just generally druidic in some sense. The ones I think are best are ones where we've just started with a question and given people a couple of days to think about it and then had them show up and talk about it. And gotten into some of the best conversations I've had at those. Generally the format is there's not a discussion leader, just sort of an organizer, there's a table full of hot water and the tea collection, however much of it happens to be there. And sometimes somebody will bring cookies or bread or whatever and people just sit down and drink tea and talk and some of the discussions are kind of guided and can go on for two, three hours, some of them. People drift in and out, but that's the general format.

EH: Is it the sort of thing that's sponsored by the druid organization but open to anybody who wants to come and therefore you also even, you get a lot of people who don't, aren't identifying themselves as part of the Carleton Druids or is it mostly people who you consider part of the Carleton Druids who come. Or is that...

IS: Mmm, most of the above (chuckle) I lost the logic train in there somewhere, but, um, we've advertised for some of the teas in the NNB and we usually do that more heavily toward the beginning of the year, but after a while it settles down to a core group that come back. And generally after a while, all of those do identify themselves as Druids, even if that's not always the case. Um, for instance, just this past weekend, one lady that's come to just about every tea this year, finally decided that she really was a Druid. The ones to which people outside the Druid group come have been the best and the worse because you get a sudden influx of new personalities and new perspectives, but you also get people who come in and sit there uncomfortably and make the whole group uncomfortable. We had one of those last week. What happens after a while is we generally stop advertising because we forget or get lazy, and every now and then we advertise a new one if there's a especially interesting topic going up. And then some people come, generally if folks don't come in the first two weeks of a term, they're not going to it seems, but people do invite their friends and bring in people from out of town and just interesting characters they've met that they think would be interested. And that continues to happen throughout the term and provides some of the growth in membership. I was going to say something... (pause) Yeah, one of the other things that happens at Tea a lot is just organizational stuff. There's a lot of sitting down, "So, what do you guys want to do this term? We've got two full moons, we've got... Samhain, we've got this... Two people

want a sweat lodge, etc." And ideas are generated and dates are marked down and on good days responsibility is delegated and then things happen from there.

EH: Would you typically at a gathering like a Tea have ritual at all?

IS: Not typically, but sometimes yes. Uh, more so in the past I would say. The Druids this year are more social than spiritual on group level. Individually, I would say they were more spiritual than most people I've known in the past, but they are so in such different directions that one led ritual at Tea would generally make somebody uncomfortable. We did a Tea somewhat toward the end of last term, this would be winter, where we talked about some basic magical skills, like raising a circle, grounding, putting a quick personal shield if stuff goes wrong, and passed energy around, and taught people how to do these things, just so that they would know. From that has come the energy experiments, which are apparently a recurring phenomena that crop up every eight years or so according to the some of the people that have been around longer, but are either on a hiatus or on their way out right now, not sure, which where we design experiments regarding what is this energy stuff we keep talking about, if I charged ten marbles out of twenty can you tell me which ones they are? Things like that. And results that we have gotten so far have been statistically ambiguous and, but personally meaningful. Like even if someone looks at the chart of results, and says, "Well, the numbers don't tell me anything." They can still go, "But I really felt something when I picked up this rock, but I didn't when I touched any of the others. So I personally think there's something there, even if the numbers don't show it." Tend to get a lot of that on the individual level, but nothing that you could present to a review board and say, see, there really is something here.

EH: You're saying teaching people some of the basic rudiments of magic, etc. How did anyone in the group learn them?

IS: Different places, and surprisingly different places. We started talking about Grounding at one point - my vocabulary for this tends to come a pseudo-Wiccan background, just because that was the first system I encountered that had a vocabulary for magic. But when we started talking about Grounding and Centering some of the people who had done Aikido before said, "Hey! I've done this, I don't know the words you're using, but this is exactly what we do, what we mean, when talk about Chi flow, when we talk about you know extending toward, extending your energy toward the attacker." Or a person who'd done something in a Quaker circle, understood exactly what was going on, and had a different vocabulary for it. I call it magic, because I haven't really anything else to call it, just like I call, whatever it is, God, because I haven't anything else to call it, but I don't attach to either of those words any of the systems that have been attached to them. I use them because they work and they are there. And making up a new vocabulary for them would only breed confusion, not that this doesn't.

EH: So what was your exposure to Wicca, since that was the vocabulary that you...

IS: Mmm, a couple of books in high school, a couple of people early on here... It's not something I've pursued, but it's something that gave me a very valuable point of reference for the experiences that started happening once I was in Druidism. Once I started doing things with the group and really paying attention to what was going on, I get...

End Tape I, Side A

EH: Ok it's recording

IS: I guess I starting looking into Wicca about the same time I started going to the Christian prayer group because after the accident when I was sixteen I just expanded, I wanted to, I wanted to know. I'd run across a set of questions that I had never of asking before, and every time that I've done that, it's just opened up a domain and a world I didn't know existed, and I looked into it every way I could. I didn't pursue Wicca very far because I didn't find it (pause) I don't find ritual as personally meaningful as I do, unstructured experience and what one might call philosophy. But the vocabulary that surrounds the ritual, becomes very useful for making sense of experience later on. So the vocabulary of Circle-Raising helps me make sense of what it is that I do when I'm uncomfortable or about to do something magical that might attract attention is I raise a circle and that could be the walls of the room I'm in, it could be if I'm in the stone circle it could be that, it just, it's something to provide a sacred space, to provide some element of shelter and protection. The vocabulary of the eternal rebirth of the god in Wicca, as opposed to the eternal existence of the goddess makes wonderful sense of the Celtic holidays, and the cycle of the year, even though Samhain isn't technically in any Celtic sense when the god dies, but if you overlay those two systems it makes both of them much clearer.

EH: Okay... Let's do some basic Carleton organization history here. Umm, at the end of your first year, you and Michelle had been ordained as... consecrated into the third order, whatever the word is...

IS: Yes, consecrated....

EH: Alright, and you were the only ones, essentially that are, there to start it up again next year. What did you do to have a group?

IS: Came back fall term sophomore year and found a package from Mec in my mailbox, that included maps of the Arb, included some of the old rituals. I don't believe yet included the anthology... yes, yes it might have had the anthology at that point. Now it had a note saying, "Go to Mark Heiman's and pick up you a copy of the anthology, which was immensely valuable to me. It also had a note saying, "check out the Hill of Three Oaks, go look behind it." And I went up and looked behind the hill, and oh my! there was a stone circle that hadn't been there before. There was a couple making out in it, so I didn't go and investigate just then, but that became a very special place to us, and to a lot of people. Organizationally, a lot of what happened during that first year was trying to get our feet under us. Michelle and I felt like we'd been dropped into things. We hadn't had the group dropped on us because we had asked for it, but suddenly we were supposed to be in charge of something we didn't understand and felt like we had very little guidance. Mec was gone, Michelle Curtis and Ann were gone, Andrea was around that year and proved invaluable. She would come down from the cities on several occasions, both to Teas and to rituals and that helped a lot. Michelle and I were both living in Faculty Club at the time, so Teas were either in the lounge there or in the Japanese garden. And there was a lot of, "So...what do we do?" There was a lot of philosophy that year. A lot of talking about different things, and a lot of trying different things. And we found somebody who was a Reiki practitioner and asked him to come down and teach us and he did that. We came across Carlos Gonzales, maybe?,

used to be on the alumni board, he's a Native American, he's a western doctor, but he's also a Native American, and he works with both systems, so we invited him down and he came and talked with us for a while. That was I think our first main event then was Samhain. [?] We've always celebrated Samhain and Beltane. They've always been the most powerful and the most well attended holidays that we've had. Close to thirty people came to that one, that first year, and we made a talking stick and passed it around. A lot of stories came out. Talking stick...

EH: Tell us.

IS: A talking stick is something Andrea told us about and maybe is a stick of some significance and some inherent power, I guess. We find a stick that volunteers, I found this one in Utah. It was a well traveled talking stick. You decorate it with different things that can provoke stories and memory and then you give it to people. And it's really fun to give it to people without telling them what it is, because what happens is you hold the stick, you stick it in the ground, and it washes stories out of you. I don't ... You can describe it any of a different ways. I've heard it describe that it sucks energy from the Earth, and washes up through you and pulls out of you stories that are already there, pulls out of the Earth stories that are there and makes you speak them, I don't know. But if you give it to somebody and have them stick it in the ground, they'll just start talking. And sometimes it's just silly stories, and sometimes it's profound. It's people coming out for the first time. It's people saying good-bye to family members who've been dead for most of a decade. Just stories associated with that. There was a lot of that at the first Samhain - I'm going to pronounce it seventeen different ways, because I've never gotten it clear. But after that we had a sweat. We had several sweats my sophomore year which was good because at the end of that, the people who know how to lead them were all gone and... Actually at the end of the sophomore year I was gone too, but we'll get to that in a while.

Sophomore year was really... was really good. It was really powerful, and felt like things were on the upswing in terms of where the group was going. During that year, we got a lot of little things figured out, like, where does the mail addressed to the Druids actually end up, and who do you have talk to make sure it ends up in the right place. Where are the different spots in the Arb that it's safe to have fires. How do you do a mailing list. How do you contact folks in the cities. Where are all these bookshelves that people keep talking about. What does it actually mean to hold a ritual. A lot of nuts and bolts things like that, a lot of experiential learning. A lot of, "Shoot. I don't know what I'm doing, what do you want me to... How do you... How am I supposed to lead?" A lot of just getting up and doing it. And discovered much later a fair amount of learning what the elements of ritual were, not in any academic sense, not in any, you know, Redown [?] the Wiccan ritual that has thirteen different elements, all of which have to be there. Not that, but just doing rituals from different places, designing rituals based on other things, seeing what worked and what didn't, and then suddenly realizing that secular weddings have the same format as, you know, pick your random pagan event. And that once people started designing rituals without knowing how rituals worked, if you leave out certain elements, it suddenly doesn't work. That they have to have a beginning and an end. Those don't necessarily have to follow one after the other, but there has to be closure, there has to be purpose. If you do a ritual without a reason behind it, not a rational

reason, just “I’m doing this for... or I’m doing this because..” If you’re lacking that it falls apart. If you’re lacking some emotional investment it falls apart. It’s little things like that that I suppose could be studied, but at least in my case, had to be picked up, gradually.

I guess through my second and third year here, I felt mostly like what I was doing with the Druids, was just gathering in, was just stabilizing, was trying to find my own feet and find out how things work, so that then, this year, I could pass on to the next generation of Druids something that they would be able to build on, that they wouldn’t have to start from scratch again. I think, had Mec’s anthology ... had the anthology not come about then, we would have been very lost. Had Andrea not been around, we would have been very lost. And I don’t know what would have happened without those two. Which is very interesting, because they never got along from what I could tell. They had very different approaches and very different perspectives. Grated with each other on more than one occasion.

EH: Has the terminology of having an Archdruid maintained itself at Carleton in recent years or...

IS: Yes, Michelle and I considered the two of us together, the Archdruid, singular. And that worked for a year. I think it’s good to have more than one person, whether you call them Archdruids or whether collectively the people who get things done are the Archdruid, I don’t know if that makes much of a difference. But it’s been a functional thing. The people who organize and made things happen and got things done were the Archdruids or Druid. I guess technically they are supposed to be Third-Order. I don’t know, if you buy the functional definition and that’s not necessary, but I think that, I personally think that some commitment of the person involved is required for a good Archdruid. That if it’s just social and just organization I don’t that it works entirely well. That argues in favor of having them be Third-Order. On the other hand, there’s David Coil, who I consider an honorary Archdruid. He’s been there through the whole past four years, he’s been more reliable than any other single person in the grove. And yet for the longest time, he didn’t consider himself a Druid, he just showed up to help, and to say actually what if you do things this way, this might work better. Or to volunteer to get firewood, things like that. And, yeah, so yes the terminology has maintained itself. Going into next year, it looks like there are five different people, none of whom could or would lead by themselves, but all of which together might make up, the Archdruid?

EH: Ok, is it time to interject your own personal history about your year off?

IS: My year off? Well, I can skim much of that, if you want. I didn’t come back fall of my junior year. I went to Germany, somewhere in the middle of the summer and learned a great deal there, had a lot of very profound Druidic experiences, mostly took the time to sit back and digest and figure out what I had learned at Carleton. Because I knew if I kept piling more on top, I’d start forgetting it all. And I needed to sit still and watch things settle out and figure out what of it was important and what of it was distracting. And one of the things I realized in there was that I needed to get to know my own family, my father and my brothers specifically. But another thing I realized was that the Druids were profoundly important to me, as an existing group, as a historical group, as a personal way of living. That none of those things, were ones that I was willing to give up. I went to England after I left Germany, and tried to find some of the old Druids, which was quite the experience by itself. If you break things down

into the Paleo-Druids, the Meso- Druids, and the Neo-Druids, I would say I didn’t find any Paleo-Druids, and I wasn’t looking for Meso-Druids, but I did find Druids as it were. People who exemplified that which Druidism teaches. who did have some profound spiritual connection that I had only grazed, and I learned an immense amount from them.

EH: These people who call themselves Druids? or people that you just recognize as...

IS: People I recognized as Druidic. I could have easily have found people who call themselves Druids, but that wasn’t what I was after. I spent some time in Glastonbury, and something that came very clear there was that there was a difference (pause) that I still have trouble articulating. Glastonbury is a town on several different levels: There are the people who live there. There’s the history of the site itself, which is impressive. And then there’s this sort-of overlay of New-Age-ness, and I hate the term, New-Age, but it describes it better than anything else. And there’s a whole set of people who are there because it’s a New-Age center. And yet it’s also a place that really does have some significance. And coming down off the Tor, I spent the night there. Coming down off the tour, seeing in the eyes of the people who lived there, the same expression regarding me, as that they regarded the people who were there because it was New-Age center. Realized that there was a difference between the way I was searching what I was searching for, then just, “Ohh, crystals. This is neat.” And realized too that that difference wasn’t showing, and that if I was going to maintain there really was a difference, I’d better figure out what it was, and how to make sure it came through. So after that I was not looking for people who called themselves Druids, but I was looking for people who had an integrity and a commitment and a depth that names don’t. And I did find some.

EH: How do you look?

IS: That’s a hard question. [Pause]

EH: How did you find who you found?

IS: By asking questions. By finding...people nets, I guess. I have an aunt in England who’s lived there for, lived in the same house twenty-three years and seems to know everybody and asked her. You know, told her what I was up to and what I was looking for and asked for where would be a good place to look and she said, “Well, go to this commune and go talk to this lady in Glastonbury and see what they say.” Discovered later that, she had said that the commune was a place that one could find real Druids. I misinterpreted that at the time, I thought that meant there were real Druids there and I would find them. What it really meant was that it was a sort of testing ground, and that people would go there and be watched by the people who owned the commune, owned it and ran it, the family that lived there. And then if they decided that these people really were looking, and really were honest about what they were up to and people they wanted to be in the know, then they would talk to you and move you along farther to tell you where real Druids were. I didn’t get that ‘til afterwards. I didn’t, I left a little confused because I’d expected one thing and hadn’t found it and then realized later what had been going on...was quite impressed at how well it worked. The lady in Glastonbury, turned out just was one, that she had known. It was funny. She was very hesitant sending me to her because my aunt herself thought that this person was a witch and not in a good sense, that she had done horrible things to her daughters, not on purpose, just by having a very chaotic persona and energy base. My aunt’s vocabulary is very yogic, which isn’t one I’m familiar with so

I'm translating things a little bit here. But going and talking with her I found, and maybe this is part of how you search, I found her one of the most genuinely insightful people I'd ever met. That after talking to her for five minutes, having never met her before, she was able to see things about me that my own parents couldn't. That people I'd known for years had no clue of. She could just look inside and go, "Oh, well, you're doing this." And it wasn't psychologizing and it wasn't mind reading. It was just genuine insight. And it was that, and an honesty about her that I really respected, and it was just a great wealth of experience and personal depth that set her apart from other people I had met who had the talk I guess but their lives didn't bear out the things they spoke of that one fellow I met who did right Chi, who could talk your ear off about healing energy and you know, "Oh, you've got...you've got these great streamers out of your hills and different things" and definitely sounded like he knew what he was talking about and his own life wasn't one in which healing seemed to have happened. And that incongruity made me very uncomfortable working with him. I cannot...I don't know, I'm in no position to judge and I can't say he didn't have anything, he wasn't real, I can't say that. But there was something unsettling....there was something discordant about it that didn't quite fit. [Pause] Anyway, that was part of my travels. Unless you have questions there.

EH: So, when you returned to Carleton, um, this time had helped you bring new things to...back to the Carleton Druids?

IS: It did. Um, after I left England I went home for two or three months and then I went on Sea semester and had a completely different kind of learning there and both of those brought more back to Carleton in my person than I had left with. But I think that they were growing experiences for me rather than the Druid group. When I got back most of the group was gone and Michelle had been in charge during that time and we kept corresponding and at one point she wanted to disband the Druids entirely and I didn't think that was right. I didn't think any one person had the right to disband a group that had been in existence longer than they had because they personally weren't working out with it. Or because people weren't taking it seriously or because it seemed nothing but a joke.

EH: Those were the reasons that...

IS: Those, if I recall, were her reasons for wanting to disband. She talks about fall and winter as the year of amnesia. They had Samhain. It went over pretty well. They did a lot of Tarot reading and stuff. Most of...I don't know, the old Druids, the old guard I guess, disappeared during that time. There were a lot of people who were around my sophomore year who were no longer there when I came back spring of my junior year and they are still at Carleton but they're no longer with the Druids. I don't know why. I don't know what happened at the end and Michelle might be the only person who does. [Pause] I forgot where I was going with that.

EH: Well, you were talking about you and Michelle having communicated and seeing that issue differently.

IS: I don't know how she managed things. Um, Andrea had worried when she heard I was leaving because she said there were three elements that were needed to lead the Druids and those were some very good organizational capabilities, some very good ideas, generations, creativities, and some personal charisma, and that those didn't all need to be embodied in one person, but if you were missing any of them in the people in charge the group would fall apart. And she worried that among the people left, there was not the element of charisma

she thought I had. Um, I don't know if that was the case. I don't like to think that [pause] charisma, if I have any, is a motivating factor in the growth of the Druid group. But during the times I've been here it's grown significantly and when I was gone it didn't. That bothers me. [chuckle] I don't, I don't want to have followers that...anyway, came back [sigh] this will be the last spring already. Picked up a lot there um, I started leading sweat lodges at that point for the first time, and that was peculiar. No, that wasn't the first time. I led the spring previous, I forgot about that. But then um...oh, we skipped a whole bunch. We skipped the circle.

EH: Tell me about the circle.

IS: Wanna do that? Ok...

EH: Tell me everything, or whatever you want to.

IS: Yeah, ok. [pause] Whoo. Can I get a glass of water?

EH: Sure. Take a break for a minute.

IS: Yeah, ok. When I got back my sophomore year there was a note in my mailbox telling me to look behind the Hill of Three Oaks. That was when I found the first stone circle and [pause] loved the place. Everyone did. There was a maze in the ground next to it at that point that faded over the rest of the year but...even that next spring, if you looked right at sunset you could still see depressions in the ground where people had walked. We used to have music gatherings out there, there were a couple of harpers, there was a lot of whistle players and singers and we had a drummer or two and we would just show up out there and play. People would do their homework out there, we had dancing, I stayed out there one night to watch a lunar eclipse. Turned cloudy all night but, stayed out there anyway. Was this really really wonderful place. Somewhat toward the end of winter term, was wandering out there one night and came across the circle and found that somebody had thrown the stones down, all the other stones, and was furious, and tried to pick them up but they were frozen to the ground. Running out?

EH: Yeah, we're running out.

IS: Ok.

EH: If you wanna hold your thought right there I will change tapes.

IS: Ok.

[End of Tape 1, Side Two. Start Tape 2, Side One]

IS: We found the, the outer twelve stones down and, which was is furious. Came storming back down to Goodhue to see if anybody knew anything or if anyone would help me put them back and they were having a...I forget who I ran into but they were having a dinner then wouldn't come help and [sigh] so they'd come up in the morning. For some reason I thought it was important to get them back up before the sun rose, so I went to talked to another friend of mine who was visiting and he said he would help in the morning. I don't remember the rest of that night that I got out there, maybe five in the morning and waited and waited and waited and nobody came so finally put the rest of the stones back up myself and paid for it for the next week or two [laugh] but managed. I was just really upset because I hadn't been able to get them up quite right and it wasn't the same after that. Then, somewhat later, maybe it was end of spring term already, Michelle and I were out wandering in the Arb together and came across the circle and found everything down, including the center stone, which hadn't been moved the first time and were furious

again and went and talked to some people who were partying on the Hill of Three Oaks and asked them if they knew anything about it and they didn't. So, the two of us together were able to move anything except the center, and neither of us could move that. Both of us together couldn't move that, so we went and found Dave Coil and his roommate and Dave, Jared, and I, together, managed to roll the center stone back into place. I don't think I thought of doing anything about it then. Somebody wrote nasty editorials to the Carletonian about it and uh, everybody was upset but nothing much happened. Then later on, getting toward Beltane we were trying to find a place to hold Beltane because the Spring Concert was happening at the same time and the Hill of Three Oaks and the circle where, we'd wanna get, weren't going to work. So I'd suggested Three Bird Grove, which seemed like a nice place. Some of the older Druids weren't comfortable with that because they'd had bad experiences with that part of the upper Arb. There was...either there was or at least there was a story of something called BOB, which stood for Big Obsidian Ball that I've never encountered and have sought, have looked for but have never run into so I don't know what credit to give this story, but if you want I'll tell it.

EH: Sure.

IS: Ok. The stories I remember. Pagan group in town was anonymously given a black obsidian ball about the size of a small fishbowl which must have cost a fortune, was just given to them anonymously. Well I thought this was really neat, until I started noticing that whoever's house it resided in, that [pause] whoever it was living with would start having random accidents. They would just drop dishes all of a sudden for no particular reason, they would cut themselves on knives, they would twist their ankles on their own stairs, just, I mean, nothing...nothing manifest, just general unpleasantness and bad luck and sort of like they had an anti-browning [?] going around. So they would give it to someone else and they would have the same thing and they would give to someone else and they would have the same thing and finally they decided they'd just better get rid of it. I don't know if they tried magic or exorcisms or anything on it first but eventually, to get rid of it, they went up one night and buried in the Arb. Uh, [laugh] I don't know if that was to ground it or to just make it go away or what but immediately after that several other people, I don't know, sensitive people at Carleton started running into this thing in the Arb that...that just, they would be walking perfectly fine through the path and all of a sudden just get totally terrified and feel and presence and leave. And this happened over and over again, different people, um, Andrea was one, Eric Stewart if I remember, mentioned something about it...that he might, my memory might be wrong there, so, someone would have to ask him. But anyways, Three Bird Grove, where I suggested having Beltane was one of the places where this had been encountered and Andrea at least thought it would be very bad idea to have Beltane there if BOB was around so I said I'd look and went up and spent the night there. Left a candle out and issued an open invitation for whatever was around to come talk to me and waited and waited and waited. I wasn't, somebody got the idea I was going out to duel with BOB and I got very worried. [laugh] I just, I just wanted to talk to find out if there was anything there and if so, what it was up to. Just an offer to be friendly with it. Nothing came, so around, I don't know, one or two, I left and started wandering about and [pause] all the times I've gotten into some other state I haven't realized it until afterwards. But I realized later that I had...that there was something akin to vigiling there where it wasn't just myself walking around for awhile. But I showed

up, I came in from behind the hill toward the circle. And everything was fine, except the center stone, and that was down. Found out later everything had been down and Wade Davis had come out and fixed everything he could but he couldn't move the center stone either so, this is the second time it had been down and the third time the circle had been vandalized, not counting broken glass and things, which, was annoying but hey. Wasn't mad anymore, was just profoundly saddened somehow and, without really thinking about it bent down, picked up the center stone, and put it back. And then stood there in shock, wait a minute, I can't lift that. [laugh]

Next morning I skipped class and wrote a letter to Mr. Lewis, the president and, might have the letter somewhere still but, said I don't know if you're aware of it but there's a circle out in the Arb that's a very meaningful place to a lot of folks. It's um, about the closest to a holy site on campus since the chapel's used for classroom sometimes and stuff, and it's just, people have really gotten a lot out of it, and found it important, and it's been vandalized three times in the past ten weeks. And, with your permission, I'd to create something more permanent. Said I'd find the rocks, I'd organize the labor, I'd orchestrate the whole process, all I wanted was his permission, if I could pull it off to build something more lasting along those lines. Well, this got bounced to Dean Govoni, and then it got bounced to...uh...Dennis Easley, and then it got bounced to the chapel, and then it got bounced back to Dean. And the upshot was, this was a very peculiar request, they didn't know what to do with it, but it wasn't against any rules. And if I could find a place with the Arb directors, that they would agree have become a permanent site in the Arb, and if I could find somebody to pay for it and all the other stuff I've mentioned, then yeah, that was ok. I didn't wanna just build it, because I guess I wanted official sanction. This has been a quiet trend through these four years that apparently Max started of getting the Druids more and more official recognition. But I wanted something officially sanctioned so that if it were vandalized, it would be an attack on the College, not just an attack on a random ring of stones. And, the intern chaplain Lisa Ebert, was leaving in four weeks and had a standing budget she could do whatever she wanted with so she said sure, and Dennis found a guy to help move the stones and Mark and Miles said Three Bird Grove was ok and, which is, about two weeks from letter to full circle. It was there, all of a sudden. And, I don't know, I was wandering around, just totally amazed and Michelle and Amanda were both teasing me saying I was acting like a new father or something 'cause I couldn't believe it had happened. I don't know if anybody ever thought it would. I know Michelle didn't. I don't know if I was even asking that question at the time, it was just like, I want this, and, it's just there. We went out and, you know, with sticks and twine and marked out where it could be and picked out what stones we wanted where and set them all into the ground so that they couldn't just be toppled over. It's just all of a sudden there. Transplanted trees to make way for it and cover up some of the tracks. One of the stipulations was that we buried the fire pit so that there wouldn't be any fires there, 'cause they were getting nervous about that. And we did that. There've been two fires that I know of since, but, those have not been officially sanctioned and one of them was interrupted, which is another story. But uh, yeah. That was really peculiar because it, it went up maybe eighth week of my sophomore spring term and then I was gone until the next spring and didn't see it for a year. [laugh]

EH: It's used? It's stayed...it's staying successful? Is it a place of power?

IS: It has accumulated more and more power over the years apparently. We did a charging ritual, we danced a pinnacle dance in the first full moon that it was standing after giving it time to establish itself. When, uh, we first set it up there was a lot of...sort of disconcerted opposition to it, a lot of "How dare the Druids create such a thing without asking us first" from random people. "You know, the old circle is a public spot. You're making a Druidic spot, you can't do that." That was not the intention. It was supposed to be a place of peace and power for anyone who'd respect it and open to everyone. I've tried to make sure it stayed that way. There was some opposition because Three Bird Grove was somebody's favorite sunbathing area, and they thought with, uh, a site there that they wouldn't have that privacy, which I suppose is true, but, I didn't know about that. [laugh]



**Figure 9 Old Circle c.1996 & New Circle c.1999
Very soon after both of their appearances.**

EH: Is the old circle still there at all?

IS: No, the old circle...at the site of the old circle was where I wanted to build the new one and at this point even though they hadn't really started publicizing it, plans for the Recreation Center were already underway, and they knew they were going to level that field and said anything that was built there would be very temporary and I wanted something more lasting. I also wanted something farther away from partying sites I guess because, while we never tried to find out who vandalized it, the assumption was that it was random groups of drunken folks who wanted to see if they could push the stones around. The current stones weigh in around two and a quarter tons for the most immediately pushable and are farther away from where people are likely to be so I'm less worried about it here. But, four of the stones from the original circle are incorporated into this one. The current south stone was the old center stone. The three stones supporting the center stone were the three largest of the old ring. I didn't want a new circle, I didn't want to create something new, I just wanted to create something lasting, and wanted as much continuity as possible between the two so that...we brought them. It's interesting seeing the people that it's become important to. I never wanted it to be just Druids and it hasn't been that. I ran into a faculty spouse this past Beltane that solved one minor mystery. For most of this year I've heard from different people that while they've been studying in the circle, this old guy, this old bearded guy, would just show up all of a sudden, walk into the circle, go around slowly touching every stone and leave without saying anything. And

someone thought it was Mec, and I said no, he's in Japan, and somebody thought it was Mark Heiman, and I said no, I don't think so. Ran into him, over Beltane and uh, I forget who his wife is, I think she teaches in the art department, but he himself is Greek and for him, there are twelve gods, and there are twelve stones in the circle. And he just found it the neatest thing, that there was this, this shrine he could use, already there, that was non, non-denominational isn't the word, but...open, I guess. And I know there are people from town that come up there, I mean even kids from high school that come up when they're having a bad day, they just come up to sit. To have it be something peaceful. [pause] I'm jumping topics I'm afraid. [laugh] You asked if we charged it, did you, or something? I don't know.

EH: About the circle?

IS: Yeah.

EH: I had just asked if it had become a place of power.

IS: Yeah, definitely. It's full of personality too, which is a little disconcerting. [laugh]

EH: In what ways?

IS: Why? Because if it's developed a personality, I don't know, this is going into either metaphysical or magical speculation, depending. There's a personality now attached to the circle. It could be something that was already at that spot that is now being noticed because there are people there more often or has grown because there's power there now, don't know. It could be something that grew there because the circle is there and people focus energies on it. It could be some other entity that just showed up and....

EH: Wow.

IS: If it's BOB he's not like the BOB I remember hearing about. I don't think it is. Um, were I Christian I would say it's an angel, but I'm not. I've run into it on a number of occasions when I was doing someone's Second Order vigil. I realized at one point that while I was speaking it wasn't me anymore. I wasn't in control of the words, that there was something standing through me, guiding the action and, to the people across from me they say I grew ten feet. It wasn't me at all that they were talking to and it remained something else, someone else until I left the circle and turned human again. Other people have talked to it, have met it, have felt it. There's one girl now who was in the little grove and was just listening. I think Mec and I were talking and suddenly went, "Oh, something from the circle just showed up." That she recognizes it on that level, that it's a distinct personality, it's not just a feeling. But I, I'm curious about it because it'll be here longer than any student at Carleton, than any individual person in the Druid group, and it does interact with people and I just wonder...I feel kind of responsible for it. I don't know if that's kind of silly but I built the circle so [laugh] it made them alive[?] too. I wonder what I've introduced. I wonder what effect it's going to have since it can communicate with people and does. So far it's acted as a sort of comforter and spiritual teacher I guess. It's selected different people out to do different things and it said, you know, have this vigil, clear this path, do this thing. It could guard people, I mean it does, but it could do that on a larger level. It could be a continuous presence. I don't know. The way one person put it, it can manipulate people if it chooses, and it will be here longer than any of you. I've seen no indication that it does or that it will do that, but it's, it's at least in some sense an unknown. [pause] I think it's safe. I've seen only good there so far.

EH: Is there anything else you want to say about um, after you got back from being gone, revived somewhat I take it and things that have happened in that period.

IS: Um, the main growth revival happened this fall, but some significant things did happen last spring. One was that while I was gone the circle was kind of vandalized. It was a much classier vandalism so it wasn't something that produced such a strong reaction. While I was in Germany at one point somebody very carefully stenciled with spray paint a face on the south, on the north stone that is...was either John Lennon, Albert Einstein, or me, depending on who you ask. It was a sharp-nosed, long haired guy with glasses and different people thought it was different folks. Somebody thought I did it, but I told them I was sort of off the continent at the time. Anyway, it was really well done and it stayed there even though people probably could have gotten it off because for some, it was a representation of the god, that it was in the right place, it was just there when they came to the circle. Yeah, it was incongruous but it was okay. A little bit of iconography. So when I came back in the spring I studied and thought about it for awhile and I left it and left it and didn't have an immediate reaction one way or another, is this okay, isn't it, 'til I don't know what finally changed but talking to several other people we decided it might be better off gone, that if we left it we could encourage other graffiti and in itself didn't quite feel right. So, got the college's help again, which is one of the reasons I was...tried to have it be an official place. Got Glen from the paint shop to put together some gunk and spent some quality time with a wire brush getting it off. Couldn't quite manage it by myself but he got, he came back later and finished up with some other stuff.

But then that spring too, were the two times that people have built fires in the circle. They built them on the center stone and left...had a drinking party and left a horrible mess. And the first time I just found it afterwards and cleaned up as best I could. Second time was another one of those peculiar otherworldly things, I guess. Ginger Wild and I were out walking and thought we'd swing by the circle one night to see what was going on and saw that folks had built a fire there. So we walked in and, you have to get Ginger's side of the story too 'cause it's much more elaborate [chuckle]. Went in and asked them what they were up to and explained that fires were not allowed in this part of the Arb, that there were too many fields, it was too close to residential area, danger of it spreading was too great and you'll damage the rock if you put it there [chuckle]. They had it built right on top of the table. Told them if they wanted I would show them where it was okay to have a fire but that we had to put this one out, and asked if there was anybody with shoes around that would help me stomp the thing out, and nobody moved. Nobody had moved since I came in, so I was like, okay, started picking up the logs off the altar, center stone, table, alter, all the same thing, I just don't know what to call it. Picking up the logs off the alter, got all the pieces I could get without burning myself and there still a lot there so I started brushing it off and then started scooping it off and picking up handfuls of coals and saying no, you can't have fires here, dumping it out, nobody moved. Just all sort of squinching back into the stones around the circle so I stomped it out and finally somebody got up to help me. I asked if they wanted me to show them either Little Grove or the Hill where they could build a fire safely and they said no, is it okay if so long as we clean up after ourselves that we stay here and I said yeah, that would be okay and left. And as soon as we were out of earshot Ginger just started laughing and laughing and I was like, what? We had been having this conversation earlier about proper, you

know, how magic only seemed to work for the right reasons and how showing off was not one of the right reasons. And, she just looked at me and said, showing off, it doesn't work if your showing off, right, right? What do you explain that with? And I looked down and at my hands and realized they were black and sooty, but I had just picked up a full fire's worth of coal and hadn't gotten burnt. And my feet were fine too. And it was just, aghhhh [laugh] what happened to....? I don't know. It's just...another thing. So....yeah. Other thing that happened that spring was the statue of the lady that used to be in the Arb disappeared. Um, I don't know how much of that's here or in the histories, but...



Figure 10 The Lady Statue of the Arb, c. 1995.

EH: I know about it but I don't remember what's been recorded. Go ahead and talk about it.

IS: Ok. You might have trace its early history, 'cause I don't know that, but the earliest I can tell of it is that there used to be a New Age group that would come to Carleton on occasion and have events here over the summer. Mec says that they built it originally. It was a statue of a lady about six feet high, carved out of a pine log with a chain saw. And she used to stand up by monument hill, years and years ago. Then, according to Mec, Carleton Christian Fellowship took it down and put a cross up, and then somebody else took the cross down and they put another cross up. But the lady meanwhile sort of drifted down the hill and into the weeds. Well, I found her there my first fall at Carleton, stood here up in the woods. I thought it was a log with a nail in it and I picked it up and I was, oh, it's a statue, that's kinda cool. Stood it up in the woods down above the dam on Spring Creek and stayed there through spring of sophomore year. And then Michelle found it down again and set it up back up, she and Amanda, still over by the creek. They said they moved it though so I went to see where it was this time and found it down again with tire marks over it and decided that was enough and picked it up and carried it to what was then Three Bird Grove and grabbed a shovel, skipped class, and set her up sort of off around the corner so you couldn't see her from the path but you could find her if you knew she was there. And she had more visitors than the circle did, early on. Um, she was there when we had Beltane there the first time and people would

leave flowers and necklaces and just different things there and I would come by and see people kneeling, talking to her, which is a very, a very beautiful statue, very generic, just a lady with her hands together, head bowed with something like a halo on. I thought she was the virgin Mary, I don't know what she might have been but people just called her the lady. Um, sometime around that second fire at the circle um, she disappeared, she vanished again. She wasn't knocked over, she was buried about two feet into the ground, but somebody could have broken her off fairly easily. Instead they actually dug her up out of the ground and carried her off. There were no drag marks, there was no, no burned logs, searched around a good bit but never found her. The hole is still there and you can still see the path to it but she's gone. I was kind of sad about that. I don't know what the New age group was or if there's any intervening stuff between when she was on the Hill and when I found her four years ago. Somebody else might know.

EH: Group that used to meet her old time [?] was called Spiritual Frontiers, but I don't know anything about the lady, before it was in Three Bird Grove, actually, is where I first saw it.

IS: Mark Heiman says that carved into the base there were two initials and a date. I don't recall that but if she shows up, that could be useful for figuring out where she's from. [pause] One year left?

EH: Sure.

IS: [laugh] [sigh] During last spring Michelle started having less and less to do with the Druids. Michelle had her...um, she herself turned toward Discordianism [?] and was still there last I knew but started having less actively to do with organizing things and running teas. [pause] This fall I started really worrying about next year because I didn't, I knew I was gone and we had one Third Order besides Michelle and I and she wasn't terribly active, and I didn't know what was going to happen, and I didn't want all the work we'd done to have to be repeated. I wanted to be able to pass something on, I wanted there to be people to pass it on to. So I tried picking the next Archdruid. That doesn't work. [chuckle] This was pointed out to me from any number of directions. Um, the circle apparently considered the person I'd picked, didn't like her, and gave her a mosquito curse so that whenever she walked into the circle mosquitoes would descend on her and wherever she sat down ants would swarm out of the ground and eat her and she won't go back now. [Eric chuckles] She still won't go there by herself. Um, Andrea kindly wrote from Seattle saying, no, you can't do that. You can't pick the person - they'll show up when it's time. So there was some grand confusion before I figured that out. But, I brought, I didn't bring them back. Two people that I knew outside of Carleton applied and came to Carleton this year, Chrissy Phelps and Mary Beth Weber and both of them were interested in the Druid group. Chrissy was a person I had actually picked to lead it and that was a mistake. For one thing she felt pressured into it and when she later found her own interest diverging didn't know how to back out. Um, we figured that out too, eventually. Mary was not interested in doing anything with the Druids. I mean, she would do stuff with them because I was there but she explicitly didn't want to have anything to do with leadership. She was very Christian herself. When she showed up the circle started talking to her and scared her badly but told her this was something she had to do and so she did, for as long as she was here. But, because I came back with them, I was here during New Student Week and during that time, during that week and a half where people haven't gotten sucked into

classes and sort of fossilized into which activities they're going to do, met most of the current proper Druids. There are perhaps three people left over from past years, but just about everybody else is a freshman that we met during New Student Week. Highly recommended, anybody in the future. [pause] Where am I going with it, I don't know. I guess since then I've been just trying to show how things work and what we've been doing, trying to pass on what I've learned without teaching. Trying to share but not say, this is how to do things, because that'll, that'll kill the group faster than anything. We had Samhain again and it was kinda disastrous because we tried to...people that were in charge of some of the things at Samhain also wanted to go to the ball that was happening at the same time, the Halloween dance and...it didn't work. Doing one or the other would have been fine. We had several sweats, um, we had a procession across campus for Samhain carrying lit candles down through the library. Yeah...[Eric laughs] I hoped we weren't going to get arrested for that but managed to get out ok. Walked up through Sayles, through the libe, down past Olin and up through Goodhue singing, it was a lot of fun. And, mostly I've been trying to show people what's going on and introduce them to all the resources, show 'em all the new, the groundwork and get other people to start leading. Something that's happened every four years more or less for the past sixteen so far as I can tell is that when there was a turnover, there was in the next generation a strong reaction against what the people before them had done. That, uh, they would react violently against it and go one way and then the next group would find that too extreme and go the other and I...I feel like because Michelle and I didn't have anything to react against we might have escaped that trend, but...to be extra careful I guess I've been trying to get the people currently involved to do more and more of the organization and more and more of the planning and ideas and things so that there's not a sudden power vacuum. [pause] One of the things they wanna do for instance is to create a, a sort of tri-monthly or quarterly newsletter that comes out. And we've got people now with the background to do that, both with the writing, writing skills we've got four or five people, all of whom write, we got one person who did a magazine in high school and knows all about the editing and the layout and stuff so I think now it can finally happen if they choose to do that. We rediscovered the web page and set up a caucus conference this year. Did a lot of um, a lot of more official stuff, a lot things during New Student Week with prospective students, just tabling and stuff. Working with the chaplain on different things. We started getting letters from prison inmates addressed to the chaplain's office saying I understand you have, from the prison chaplain to the Carleton chaplain, to us saying that I understand you have a Druid group there. I've got someone here who's looking for that kind of spiritual guidance. Could you do something about it? And, never quite know what to do with those but, we're working on it.

EH: I get those too, I'd love to pass them on to you frankly. [laugh]

IS: Ok. That'll work.

EH: Yeah.

IS: One thing I've wanted to do is make up, for all the letters that say, send us all your information, I just wanted to make up a form letter saying we don't have any, look at this website. But, haven't done that for some reason. But I started to, actually, because it's more fun to answer them in person, is, once or twice a term getting all the letters that have come in like that and just passing them out at Tea. Saying hey, take one. It's too much for any one person to do but if everybody

writes one letter every five weeks we can do it. The more serious letters, like the ones from prisoners, I try to answer. And I feel really weird doing that because I don't feel like I'm a spiritual anything. I'm just a guy. Just...ran away too slow, responsibility jumped in. [pause] So this year's been smoother and less eventful than any of the previous, I guess. Lots has happened but nothing, nothing as monumental building the circle or as...suddenly trying to run the group. I think it's been the most, paradoxically I think it's been the most productive year on an individual basis. Not for me, but for people in the group. People have started coming to it not just because it sounded neat. People have always come to it for that, but now people have come to it for...great variety of reasons. To have somewhere to express their irreverent silliness that either gets them in trouble or just looked at strangely anywhere else. One guy loves to make up games and stories and masks and put on impromptu plays. He's doing that now, here, but couldn't find an outlet for that before. We've got die hard scientists who at the same time feel there's something more there and wanna look into it, but aren't religious. We've got a couple of them. We've got people who are profoundly religious, but who have suddenly asked themselves, wait a minute, I think Christ is a great guy but I'm not sure I'm Christian anymore. What am I supposed to do with this? And...feel lost in their churches and start just exploring this way, going well, maybe, maybe there are other ways of looking at time, maybe there are other ways of looking at life, you know, what does this mean. I don't, I wish people had written more in the past about personal experience as well as personal history because there's been a lot of magic this year and these past four years. People have had visions in sweat lodges and have talked about them and have gotten very scared sometimes because they don't know what sort of precedent they have, or what they might mean and since, at least, these years the Druids haven't had a teaching, a cosmology, we've never been in a position to say, oh, you saw this in the sweat, well, that means x. It's just, well, I don't know what it means. You have to figure that out. I can show you these books, I can tell you what I've seen, but I don't, I don't know. There's been a lot of visions. There's been a lot of...lot of tory [?] hallucinations, I don't know. People talking to and getting responses from things in the Arb, in the circle, God, whatever you want to call it and, part of it is that those are very intensely personal experiences and I don't know if they'll ever want them written down. But I feel like if they're, if it's not acknowledged that they happened, that element of the group will be lost. I know that way back in the beginning, someone at the first Samhain ritual started speaking in tongues and scared everybody else to death. But I know it's happened, I know that the Druids as a group have always had some peculiar influence on the weather. Andrea talks about the Winter Carnival people approaching the group when she was in charge. Week before Winter Carnival with no snow on the ground and asking if they could do something and they did a modified rain dance on Farmhouse lawn and day before the festival, just Rice County got hit with a snowstorm. [Eric chuckles] We've done things were we needed it sunny for Beltane and it got cloudier and cloudier and cloudier and cloudier and we finally said wait, come on, could you just be sunny, please? And it would get cloudy right up to that night and then go clear, against all weather maps and stuff. It was just...none of it's impossible but it's too reliable to...comfortably call coincidence. Even had one night where we asked, Amanda and I asked that, we're having a sweat, ok. Told everybody, make sure we have nice weather for the sweat. We didn't specify beyond that. One person thought nice meant sunny.

One person thought it meant windy. One person thought it meant cold so there would be no mosquitoes. It hailed. It did everything at once. [Both laugh] It just got utterly chaotic, so we cancelled the sweat. We moved inside to the sauna in the ladies locker room and uh, said ok, we'll have the sweat next Saturday. Everybody think warm, dry, and clear, ok? [laugh] None of this ambiguous stuff. And it was. It's just, it's unnervingly reliable. But I know that whether stuff has been attached to the Druid group all the way back to Dave Fisher but...if it doesn't get talked about I wonder if that'll get lost.

EH: Well, this tape will be record of some of that for later people maybe. I ran into the story from that first year uh, as well as one of the women having a vision that, of uh, I've forgotten the details of, room with a, something draped with a flag or something and uh, just before Kennedy's assassination so that was the interpretation of that later.

IS: Yeah, she saw three black rocks that she thought were three graves and the flag I think. [pause] Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy, and somebody else were assassinated in quick order.

EH: Well, there's five years between Kennedy and King and Robert Kennedy.

IS: Yeah.

EH: But, well, anyway. That's beyond our...[both laugh] Is there still, is there still overlap um, with cloak-wearing?

IS: Oh, yeah. We tried to dispel the Druid stereotypes. We did not have orgies, we did not have drinking parties in the Arb, and we do not all wear cloaks. These are the three main myths...you know.

EH: I've had it explained to me before that the cloak people and the Druids were not the same group although there was a lot of overlap. This was a previous generation of...

IS: Yeah. There are two main groups that...tend to accrue cloaks. So the Druids and the Society of Creative Anachronisms. Those two have a lot of overlap. There are also a few people unassociated with either who wear cloaks just because they like cloaks. So...David's been one of our best apologists for this has always said, you know, not all those who wear cloaks are Druids and not all Druids wear cloaks. The problem is, currently most of the Druids do wear cloaks, at least sometimes. And, all the people who wear cloaks visibly on campus tend to be Druids so we've, we've tried to dispel it but it creeps in. The orgies, there's never been an officially sanctioned Druid orgy. Members of the Druids have been involved in things that could be called orgies, and until Nick's last visit there were no alcohol drinking parties with the Druids, but that was a tradition from his time I wasn't comfortable giving to the group as a whole, passing on that way but, on an individual basis, thought it was ok to humor him with. Yeah. No drinking parties with Mec. [both laugh] Dangerous thing.

EH: Well, let me ask what you foresee for yourself in terms of future Druidism. Will you be involved in another group? Will your Druidism become almost entirely an individual thing? Will you have continuing contacts with the Carleton group? What's your best guess?

IS: A lot of questions there. My Druidism can't be a purely individual thing anymore. The way we understand orders now has something to do with that. First Order, the way we've been describing it, is you consider yourself a Druid, plain and simple. Second, you consider yourself a Druid and find something, you agree with the basic tenets, that's also First Order. You agree with basic tenets, you find something

valuable in the search itself and on a personal level you'll continue that search for the rest of your life. Maybe not with the Druid group, maybe not with any religion at all but just that kind of thinking, that kind of prayerful and rational consideration that makes one a Druid whether they use the name or not. That you're personally committed to that for the rest of your life. Third Order is all that plus a conviction to share. Not necessarily to teach, but to share what you've learned, and to share that way of thinking with the people around you. And I've come to that understanding after I came to Third Order, but it's something that imposes itself. I've watched other people go through the orders now and it's always been something that becomes exactly as serious as you take it. And, if you take it as either a lifelong commitment or as a commitment to share and teach in some sense, then it becomes that. So whatever I do, Druidism will come with me and I'll share the fruits of it and whatever I can of it with those around me. I do think I will always have connections with the Carleton grove, as long as there is one. Um, I don't know how sporadic that will be. I know folks at Carleton now and I will for the next four years. I myself will be in the Pacific for the next four years so I probably won't show up on campus during that time.

EH: That'd be hard. [both laugh]

IS: Yeah. There has been a grove started now in my hometown by one of the ladies that came to Carleton from there and then went back and I'm sure I'll be connected with that. I don't know if I'll be in a position of leadership again. I hope that I won't anytime soon because I've been doing it for too long and I don't think I'm qualified. And I want to do more learning without, without the pressure of being in charge and without the distance of being in charge that when I lead a ritual or a sweat or a celebration, it's very difficult to get into it and get the full effect of it because I'm orchestrating it. I'm being a stage director in some sense, and I'm making sure in the sweat that people are doing okay, that it's not too cold, that we have enough water, that things happen in the right order, and I can't just sink into it and disappear and appreciate the experience while I'm doing that. And I've been doing that for too long so...Wherever I am next I hope it's not as a leader. [pause] I had a dream while I was at sea that has made me think a lot about my future relationship with this grove. And that was that I was walking down Second Street toward the Arb years and years from now, and there was a war going on. Not anything official or national, just lots of people killing each other and doing it in the name of Druidism, and in my name. And...somebody who'd just killed somebody under a bush was talking to me, telling me about this prophet Irony from years back who'd told them all these things and they were doing this for him and all this stuff and ran off and didn't recognize me at all. And I, I walked out to the circle and found that they had very carefully destroyed the entire outer ring but left the center, but done that through some perversion of something I'd once said and heard a voice inside me just saying let it go, let it go. [pause] I was quite serious when I said I don't want followers. I know I've affected the group here and I know I've changed the way it's going to be in some sense, but I've tried very hard never to have the things I've done become Scripture. To have people do things because I did them and on a certain level, I would be very fearful if that were ever to happen. I don't think it will. I think the people here now are sensible enough that it won't, but I...I...I don't know. I never want it to.

EH: I'm thinking that might be a good place to stop. Thank you, Irony.

IS: Thank you.

Interview with Merribeth Weber

Carleton AD from about 1998 to 2003, an extraordinarily long period of time overlapping with the departing of Irony Sade and Ehren Vaughn.



MS: ...Michael Scharding, class of '94 interviewing Merri, class of 03.

MW: Yep.

MS: And today is May 2nd, Friday, 2003, Common Era. We're going to do an interview with Merri about her last four or five or six years here at Carleton and what she's done with the Carleton Druids and other groups that she's been with while she's been here. Why don't we start off by having Merri tell us a little bit about where she grew up and some of the influences in her early childhood that are of interest to this interview.

MW: I grew up in Mexico New York, which is in the middle of nowhere in upstate New York, near Lake Ontario. I lived on a back road in the country and spent the majority of my time running around in the woods and the hay fields and scaring the deer. So I think that that's probably the main influence on my Druidism, or having ended being a druid. That and I grew up Seventh Day Adventist, which is kind of a weird bunch of Christian people, sweet people. I eventually decided that it wasn't quite for me; hence going the Druid route instead of still being Seventh Day Adventist. They're big on being natural, sort of natural foods and that sort of thing. We always used to go for long walks on Sabbath. Nature walks were a big thing, going for hikes, spending time camping. I think that was a big influence...we'd do this thing where'd go for a nature walk on a Saturday after having been to church in the morning and there'd be a big group of people, lots of kids and whatever, and we'd walk along and all the kids were told

to look for a Sabbath surprise. It was a special thing for it being the holy day, that there would be some special thing out in nature that we would find.

MS: Like...?

MW: Like Robin's eggs in a bush or special flowers hidden somewhere that we just happened to notice. It was this whole kind of thing of nature is part of God and I got a lot of that at an early age so...that probably has an influence.

MS: What about your parents, do they have any interests that they were keen to teach you besides Seventh Day Adventism?

MW: As far as spirituality?

MS: Yeah.

MW: I don't know. They taught me to have common sense and be level headed about religion. They raised me with an idea of religion and this is how you do things. The whole idea of don't be mean to other people because of religion and don't just assume people are wrong because they're not the same as you. A lot of things like that that I think is very good and that other people that grew up in the same religion may not have had...because my parents were very much... they're very open.

MS: Were there any individuals, people that in your childhood who were spiritual teachers of any type, individually. Pastor or...?

MW: Yeah, probably Pastor Sadie. Pastor Sadie was the Pastor when I was 8 to 12 or something around there. He was a little unorthodox...he had a tendency to where a leather jacket and ride a Harley. And I thought he was the best Pastor in the world, he was just super cool...and he was just a really great guy all around and was known for giving sermons that were half an hour longer than they were supposed to be...not the greatest thing, but he was into it. He was big on spreading the word of God in his thing that he was doing. But at the same time he was very down to earth and just a normal human being which I think spoke really well to me as a little kid because...you know, I could relate to somebody that read a motorcycle because my brothers rode motorcycles. But at the same time he was a holy man, he was a Pastor, and he was very spiritual. And he was perfectly willing to talk to me even though I was a small child; lots of people just ignore children, so to me, I was like wow...he must be the greatest guy in the world.

MS: I think that's probably because people are afraid of the kinds of questions kids might ask. [laugh]

MW: That's entirely possible.

MS: They haven't learned to keep the deep important questions to themselves yet. When you were looking for colleges, what were you looking for?

MW: I didn't really know...was part of the problem. I knew I was going to go to college because I was smart and smart people went to college...was basically my reasoning. I figured my family would be disappointed in me if I didn't go to college and what in the world would I do if I didn't...I'd probably live on the streets somewhere and be a loser and I don't want that so I'd better go to college. I don't think I worked it all out particularly well...I just figured that was the next step so I was looking for a place that had an atmosphere that I would like because I didn't really like my high school much.

MS: What was wrong with your high school?

MW: One...I was bored out of my mind. Two...the people just didn't make any sense to me, they were just, they cared about being popular and wearing the right color lipstick and which

boys they should date or shouldn't and...I wasn't so much into that. I liked to sit in the corner and read books and ride horses and run track. And occasionally do theater...I guess that that sums up my time in high school.

MS: That sounds like the solitary route, actually.

MW: Yeah. I didn't like...they seemed so petty. There's nothing, no creature in the world more vicious than teenage girls. Now they were never vicious to me because I just didn't attract attention, but I watched them...I was like, 'This is not a nice place, I don't like it and nobody ever does anything interesting. There aren't people that I can talk to unless I want to talk about make up so, well gee, I want to find a place that's more interesting and has more interesting people in, and has things I can learn.' So I picked Carleton...

MS: Over...?

MW: Over any Adventist schools, I was still Adventist at that point and they have a big education system. So I thought, hey, I could go to some Adventist school in Australia, wouldn't that be great...cause, you know, Australia. There was the local college...I wasn't going to go there, definitely. There were some other places on the East coast, I don't even remember now. But, basically, I got all these brochures in the mail and I read all these brochures and there was the boring pile and then there was the king of interesting pile. There were three in the kind of interesting pile...weren't many at all. Basically I'd heard a lot about Carleton because I knew Irony who was Archdruid before me and he...

MS: Where did you meet Irony?

MW: He went to the same high school as I did.

MS: Oh really?

MW: Yeah. We dated all through my time in high school. We started dating when I was at the end of ninth grade and he was at the end of his senior year...which was this bizarre thing.

MS: Was Irony different back then?

MW: Yeah.

MS: What was different about him?

MW: He was younger. [laughs]

MS: [laughs]

MW: So I knew about Carleton through him. He'd told me lots of stories because of...dating for a long time. So it sounds like just a fascinating place and I knew about the Druids through talking to him because he became Archdruid and I thought, oh my goodness, that's scary, they're Pagans, aren't they. So my initial reaction to the Druids was 'Wow, that sounds scary. Do they do Satanic rituals in the woods, or something?' He explained that no, that was not what they did, they actually liked trees a lot and that was the main driving force. [laughs] Between all of the fun stories that I heard from him and the fact that I knew it was a good school and the fact that their brochure was one of the few interesting ones and that it was far enough away from home that I would go away from home...because I thought that was a big thing, to move out of my parents and be somewhere else. I applied to Carleton, early decision cause I thought, hey, they're good and if they reject then...I'll apply somewhere else. It was very much...I had senioritis, I didn't want to do anything so they accepted me so I went to Carleton. And then I decided Carleton was really really hard and scary and I didn't know if I wanted to do this whole college thing so then I took a year off.

MS: Was that your sophomore year?

MW: That was actually halfway through my freshman year. Right away I was just like no, no, this is crazy.

MS: You know, back in the early eighties and nineties we used to have a ten day freshman week before you went to classes for orientation and they found out that too many kids were dropping out in the first week...they shortened it down to two days.

MW: Yeah.

MS: It is frightening, a lot of people get home sick when the first workload comes through with two hundred pages for the weekend.

MW: Yeah. That was kind of it. When I first came here I thought I was going to major in linguistics. I didn't really know what linguistics was, I knew it was the study of languages, I loved learning languages, I spent a year in Germany when I was in high school. So I thought, hey, that's the thing to do. And then, my first term I took an upper level German class, Greek, and a freshman seminar on linguistics and I hated it, all of it. It was horrible.

MS: You know what I thought linguistics is like. Everybody likes a good joke, but there are certain people who try to organize and classify jokes, like, this is this kind of humor, this is this kind of humor. [laughs]

MW: [laughs]

MS: That's what linguistics is. People who love the languages but hate to go into the nit-picky details of why this is this and why this is that. I could never take linguistics.

MW: I don't know, it didn't click with me. I got so frustrated with it. So, then when I didn't want to do the major that I thought I wanted to do and hated all my classes my first term and I didn't do very well then I was just like, man college, what was I thinking. So I came back winter term and I talked to a bunch of people and I was like, you know, I really am not enjoying this, can I leave now? They said, well, yeah, I guess you can because you're not doing very well in your classes and you do seem to be quite unhappy here so, sure you just go on and take some time off...come back later.

MS: Where'd you go?

MW: I went home for a while. Then I came back here for a while, just working, random odd jobs. I worked down at More 4, I worked at the dry cleaners. That was interesting. Then I went and took a three month trip to England and Ireland, the whole British Isles thing...hitchhiked around there for a while, it was kind of fun, kind of crazy. Then I came back to home and decided it's time to go back to school now. Came back to Carleton, they wouldn't let me in for winter term, what would've been my sophomore year if I'd gone along with everybody else. So I kind of lived in somebody's room where I wasn't allowed and slept under their bed, quite literally...eventually got back into classes for spring term and then I had a room of my own, it was amazing. Then I was like, 'Hey, Carleton, this is pretty great, 'except you shouldn't have two freshman years...I was a freshman for two years and it was just awful.

MS: I had two sophomore years, it worked out great.

MW: See, sophomore year is pretty good. You can have two sophomore years but you know, having to say you're a freshman for two years, I didn't like that. But the rest of it was great...I really enjoyed it once I came back, and I was ready then. It's like, yeah, ok. College, I still have no idea what I'm going to major in but that's okay because it's liberal arts...I can take whatever I want for a while.

MS: What did you think about the Carleton students in general.

MW: They're all kind of crazy. I really like Carleton. The Carleton students...there's been a change, see, it's different now. When I came here as a freshman, basically it was just sort of this school for really smart odd balls...which was great, that was what I looking for. I wanted a school for smart people who were weird because that would suit me because I'm smart and I'm kind of weird. So I came here and there's just all these crazy people everywhere and they do all sorts of crazy things and they're stressed all the time. And, you know, I just made a lot of friends and I thought wow is just the greatest, best, place I could possibly have come. I think that's true. And then I hit my junior year and suddenly started taking organic chemistry...oh my goodness, I'm gonna die, this is just way too stressful. You know, but I was enjoying it at the same time that it was slowly eating my soul. But the thing is that the last couple of classes of freshman that have come in have been different than that. They're all...I mean they're all very smart, as expected, and they're a little odd, but they're a lot more mainstream than any of the people that...you know, the balance has shifted. It used to be that the majority of people were a little off kilter from the mainstream popular culture folks that you run into a lot in high school. It's shifted now, and there was a small contingent of people that were still in that mainstream sect, but now it's shifted so that it seems like the majority of the underclassmen are now kind of mainstream and you know there's a few odd balls out of those freshman and sophomore classes and there's all of us upperclassmen who are sitting here going, 'Why is everyone wearing Abercrombie and Fitch and they've all got cell phones, what's going on'...I have a cell phone, I'm sad to admit this but...I can't bash the cell phones too much.

MS: Friends of mine back in '89 were deploring to me, back in '85 when they put telephones into every dorm room it completely changed everything [dramatic]. No more hall phones and people yelling down trying to find people. And then when I was '94 I was telling other people the same thing you told me and so I'm wondering if this is golden age mentality or is it really changing.

MW: Well, it does change. I mean you really...I think I see it even more because of being here five years instead of just the four. It's not big changes, it's not bad...I mean I'm friends with a lot of sophomores and freshman that are great people. It's just slightly different from the way it was when I first got here. It's funny to see that. And it's funny to look around and look at all of the things that have changed on campus too. Just...where I used to eat my meals, everyday for my first two years here. There's a wall there, I can't go to that place anymore. It's gone, it's a storage room. [laughs] They walled up the pit in Burton. It's gone. White walls you can't walk in there, no pit.

MS: No one eats at Burton anymore?

MW: There's Burton, but there are sections of the dinning hall that they've walled off and you can't go in there anymore. I think it's something to do with the basement having problems and they had to store things other places so they walled off sections and made it storage rooms.

MS: Yeah, I don't like it when they tamper with my campus. Come back every year or two and something...there's a new building or there's a new field or...something's always changing. Guess they have a purpose to it. So, Irony introduced you to the Carleton Druids?

MW: Yeah.

MS: But, were there any other clubs that you were interested in when you first came to Carleton?

MW: What did I get involved in? Long time ago. There's folk dancing. I did start off going to that a little bit. I haven't gone to folk dancing I think in two or three years now but when I first came that was one of them. Think I went to Pickin' 'n' Grinnin' for a while. These are sort of a lot of overlapping things. Anime society. I'd never seen Anime before, I was kind of confused by that. I know I went to that for a little while. Got into Film society. I don't remember at what point...but...for a while I went to film society every Wednesday. There was one term that we termed the Malko-term. It was John Malkovich movies the entire term. Film society was so so strange. That was a long time ago.

MS: You staying...currently in any other groups now, besides Druids.

MW: Yep. Interestingly enough, I'm head of two groups on campus and I can't put either of them on my resume because one of them is the Druids which people don't take kindly to...it's a little weird...and the other is the Assassin Guild.

MS: Woman after my own heart.

MW: Yeah, [laughs]

MS: And my head. [laughs]

MW: Yeah, I ended up with the Assassin Guild by accident. Ehren Vaughn ran it last year and at the end of the year he couldn't find anybody to take it and I said 'Well, if you can't find anybody, I'll do it, but you know I've already got other stuff to do so look around for other people first...' he couldn't find anybody. So I ended up with that too.

MS: Not good for getting rid of that stress of your senior year, isn't it.

MW: Well, it's fun, it's really fun, I like running the Assassins. Because, you know, I deploy people to kill other people with little plastic guns...it's really, it's cathartic. And sometimes I go around with my big foam axe. That's pretty great. But I'm also involved in Aikido. Been doing that for a couple of years now. I've done dance off and on. I've danced Ebony...I didn't this term. They've gotten very sleazy. I mean...Ebony's always been sleazy. It's getting sleazier...I'm amazed. Still just as much fun as ever. Yeah, I think that's about it as far as extracurricular activities.

MS: So, what is your actual major here at Carleton?

MW: I'm a neuroscience Major.

MS: Neuroscience?

MW: Yes. It's a special major

MS: What's that?

MW: Um, brains.

MS: Brains?

MW: Yeah.

MS: How they work?

MW: Yeah. Basically. It's a combination of the biology department, the psychology department and the chemistry department, basically. More biology than anything else and not so much on the chemistry but I did have to take organic chemistry.

MS: Is this a field that you intend to work?

MW: Oh, beats me. I considered grad school or medical school, decided I really don't want to go to medical school, maybe grad school but not right away. Truthfully the plan at the

moment is to move to Ann Arbor and live with a couple of friends and have a job for next year.

MS: I hear there's an ADF grove over in Ann Arbor.

MW: IS there?

MS: Yes. One of the biggest ones. Might have to spy on them a little bit.

MW: I better look them up. You should give me contact information.

MS: We used to have a RDNA grove with Shelton back then, back in the '70s too. Quite the happening Druid's spot.

MW: That's great. It's also the big Aikido Mecca.

MS: There's got to be a connection.

MW: I think there is. There are lots of Druids that have done Aikido and lots of Aikido that do...One of the senior students right now in Aikido is one of my co-Archdruids, that's Steve-o, Steve Crimmins. Yeah, lots of people migrate there, it's sort of, it's a Carleton place to go. Used to be Seattle and now, these days it seems to be Ann Arbor, at least for the circle of people I know.

MS: When I was in St. Cloud we had an Aikido club mixed in with the druids. At MSUA we had an Aikido club mixed in with the Druids. So I'm starting to see a pattern running through here.

MW: Yeah, there seems to be, Aikido seems to be an overlap, folk dancing, and folk music.

MS: Sometimes theater.

MW: Sometimes theater, yeah. We haven't had too many overlaps with theater recently although I've done some theater at Carleton but I'm not really a theater person.

MS: See I'm a complete, I'm probably the worst actor in history.

MW: [laughs]

MS: My movies well show that. Andrea Davis back in the '90s brought in a lot of theater majors. That's why we had so much back in the '90s. Moving on to the next phase. You were a little apprehensive about the Druids before you came to Carleton. What was your impression of them, or how did you first...well Irony probably took you to the first service.

MW: Well, actually what happened is he'd gotten that circle built out in the Arb and the very first day that we got here, Chrissie Phelps, who also was Arch Druid for a little while then she went off her own little way, she's actually living in Fish house now which is sort of funny, it's the Christian house. She didn't start off as Christian here, she went the opposite way. I came in as Christian, went Druid, she came in as Druid and went Christian.

MS: Kind of a crossing place, cross roads.

MW: We got here the first day, all three of us because we're all three from the same home town and had gone to high school together and been friends and Irony took us out to the circle and I walked into the circle and the place was just buzzing. I was like wow, this is really cool, I've never experienced anything quite like this before. I think basically that's, I decided ok, this is a good thing. I didn't know what I would think of the Druids until I walked into the circle and as soon as I walked in it was just like, 'Ok, this is something good and I think this is something I'll be involved in.' That was it. Already before the first service, which I think we had a full moon celebration still during new student week. Already by then I was recruiting other people rather than being a freshman being recruited myself. That's where a lot of the

main people, that's where a lot of that group came from was that night during New Student Week, Irony was like, 'Hey, there's a full moon, we'll have a full moon service right away when it's just still all freshman, we'll get people to come. Why don't you ask some of your friends that you've been meeting.' I was like, 'Oh, yeah, sure, sounds like fun.' So, I ran off and Ehren was in my New Student Week group, Chris Middleton lived a floor above me, Chrissie of course came, a bunch of other random people, John Parejko, fiddler John, the guy with the fiddle at every Beltane playing Mairi's Wedding and all that and grabbed all them. The only way that we got John to come was, somebody...he'd set his fiddle down next him, they picked up the fiddle and ran with it and he raced after them just screaming 'give me back my fiddle.' Then we managed to get him to descend to come for a couple of minutes, then I think he had to go play fiddle somewhere. A lot of the crowd that came in with my class came from that new student week thing where we were all friends, we were milling around. I was like, 'You don't want to go to this particular whatever they were taking us to, you know,' how to find the swimming pool at Carleton, you know, those meetings they have. 'You don't want to do that, we should all go do this,' and then they told their friends and they told their friends and we got a bunch of people right away. It was really neat. And then everybody stuck, kept coming to tea...

MS: Were there many old timers back then?

MW: There were a few, there was Dave Coil, and there was Simon with the three or four last names [laughs], a guy that always played the drums, he played several different instruments. There was Michelle Hadjer, was still around, she was sort of peripheral but she came to some things. Amanda Bradley. She was also a Neuroscience major. I don't know, maybe there's an over lap there to because Dan Brewer is graduating with me this year and he's also a neuroscience major, he comes to a lot of Druid thing...he was raised semi-pagan. I don't know who all there was in those days.

MS: Was the group doing pretty well before you came along?

MW: Yeah, it was doing pretty well. I know Irony had done a lot of work legitimizing the Druids...

MS: Legitimizing?

MW: Yeah, he did a lot of, you know, he made friends with the chaplain, and he started, he made friends with all the Arb people and he started making all of the druid events non-alcoholic on general principle because well, it made funding easier. And then it turned out that a lot of people that came in were a lot of people that didn't drink period so it just sort of stayed that way.

MS: I haven't noticed many heavy boozers in all the druids over the years except for maybe myself.

MW: Well, I just know that before Irony came along there was, you still used whiskey for waters of life and things like that and he made some minor changes of that, of just like... 'Well, in general we'll be non alcoholic because the college likes us better that way and none of us really drinks any how. Then we'll have water instead of whiskey.' A few little things. I think it made a bit of a difference with the administration. He made friends with security and the Arb guys like Myles Bakke and all them. Which I think helped because when they ran into us naked in the Arb they'd be like, 'Oh right,' you guys instead of beating us with their flashlights or whatever. I know that was a lot of stuff that I heard about. A lot of it was before I came. Then when I showed up...Irony had actually planned on training Chrissie in as a new Archdruid. What ended up happening was that Chrissie was, you know, she

came to stuff and she did stuff but she wasn't quite as into it as I ended up being so I started jumping into Archdruid stuff immediately, as soon as I got here...foolish freshman that I was and then look what I got stuck with.

MS: There is an old saying that the person that runs away from responsibility the slowest becomes the Archdruid.

MW: And that's really true. That's what's happened.

MS: You might be necessarily gifted or not, you just ran the slowest.

MW: That's about how it goes. Just whoever is foolish enough to take on responsibility...they end up with it.

MS: All of it.

MW: Yep.

MS: Have you found over the years that most of the work is done by a small number or is it shared pretty equally?

MW: Well, back in the day it was shared pretty evenly...oh my roommate too...Chloe Flynn was in on things for a long time there. Because there was a big group of us that were all friends and all involved in the Druids. We split up stuff amongst ourselves really well but as the years went on various members of that group sort of schismmed off and didn't come to Druid things quite so much and went on to whatever else they did and at the point it became more difficult and it became fewer and fewer of us doing more and more of the work because as people came in they'd do bits and pieces but they'd sort of come and go. It's sort of an anomaly to have had that big group all in one class and all a huge group of friends go through together like that. I think, I haven't seen it happen since. We'll get a few new people every year but they'll be from all different groups and they'll be kind of friendly but, I don't know.

MS: I'm kind of wondering if leaders appear in a vacuum. When there's already strong leadership I think that people tend to follow but when people come in and they notice that there's no one in charge they tend to take on responsibilities they wouldn't normally do. If you already have a very strong, well organized Archdruid, you probably won't get anyone in one in the next class who'll do anything. That's what I'm wondering.

MW: Possibly. I don't know, I know when we all showed up Irony was in charge of everything and he was actually quite organized, planned a lot of stuff. I think what happened is that I jumped in and started doing Archdruidy stuff with him right and then there were...who was, I think it was Ehren, Chris Middleton, and Chloe at the end of that year...see I was not in classes so I was not...I'm like I'm leaving, I don't know when I'm coming back, maybe I never will, I'm heading for Africa or something. I didn't know what I was doing. So Irony decided we should have new people come in, who wants to do it. So the three of them said we'll do it. So they took over as Archdruids. Then I was gone for fall term and then I came back winter term and jumped right back in doing stuff so it was four of us that were in charge of things and that worked out quite well, for a while

MS: Four is quite nice.

MW: It was a quite nice number. Eventually it got harder because we all changed a little as we went along and eventually there was a little bit of friction between some of us. That made it a little more difficult for delegating responsibility and sharing things but by that time we started to have some people coming along behind us and so we could shunt off work there and it still worked out quite well. Then it got down to where

it's only me and Steve-o and Corwin. We're the only ones left, it's a very small group at this point.

MS: In the past most Archdruids have only gone for one year as Archdruid, usually their senior year. Usually a junior is usually following behind. But you had almost three or four years as Archdruid. You think that's a better plan... because I know a lot of Archdruids, like Irony and Michelle and Ann were, they all started off in their freshman year doing work. Does it make a difference.

MW: That's what I did as well. I'm very tired at this point. I think it's better to come in as at least a sophomore or junior and start doing it because, at this point I've been doing it for nearly five years and I've gotten very tired and very frustrated with it because it's, it's a big time commitment. You have to keep the events happening, you have to try and get people in. It's very hard to delegate work to people. People are very resistant.

MS: Especially very busy people.

MW: Yeah, I mean, at Carleton it's just so hard. Now somewhere else where people weren't stressed and writing papers all the time, they might be more willing to volunteer for stuff. But it's tough and you don't want to scare away newbies by saying, 'Hey, you gotta do work now.' Because they're like, 'Hey, if this is work I'm not going to do.' So it's the people who'd been around a while that are doing the work. Well, I've been around the longest so I'm still doing the work. And I've enjoyed it. But I think it would be better, for my leadership of the group, if I hadn't been doing it so long because I know I'm frustrated at this point. Especially because it's my senior year and I just want to play and I have six weeks before I graduate...

MS: Last chance for freedom.

MW: I just need to play. I'll do what I need to do but 'Steve-o, Corwin, you guys do it.' The two of them are like, 'Oh, but we've got so much work. I can't do that. Oh no, no, you please.' 'I'm working on comps, do it, do it.' So all three of us are just sitting around going 'Well I've got a paper,' 'Well, I've got comps,' 'Well, I've got to do this thing,' you know? 'You do it,' and passing it around like playing hot potato all the time about who's going to do what. But it's worked out pretty well because we're always trying to shove it off on somebody else but when it comes down to things needing to get done, you know, we do it.

MS: What kinds of activities did you guys do, perhaps in your first years, and has that changed over the four years, have new things been added. Or removed.

MW: Well, lets see, We started off with full moon celebrations as often as we can manage to remember to do them. We had the fall equinox celebration.

MS: Usually the biggee...

MW: Yeah. And sweat lodges, and Imbolc, Spring Equinox if people are around for it, it usually ends up falling in midterm break, or the spring break, rather. Tea every week, that's been consistent. At tea we do discussions or arts and crafts or Arb walks. There's all sorts of activities that take place in that. And then there's the big Beltane bash every springs, that's our biggest thing, and sort of some more sweat lodges in the spring. It started off like one in the fall and one in the spring and it's gotten up to two in the fall, two in the spring a lot of the time. We were going to try and do three this term...

MS: Sweatlodges?

MW: Yeah, but we got rained out a week or two ago and where we were going to do. What else do we do. I think a lot of that has stayed pretty consistent. There are some random traditions that got started up some where along the line that kept right on going, like the donut tree. For a while there was marshmallowing which was sort of like therapy, get a bunch of marshmallows, you choose some one, it was...instead of a stoning there'd be a marshmallowing and you be like, this marshmallow is for this particular sin and you'd say what the sin is and throw it at them. Now you can make stuff up, it doesn't have to be stuff they ever actually did and at any point in time you can stop and say 'Stop the marshmallowing, explain this sin to me' to the poor person getting marshmallowed and whatever it was, it didn't matter if they did it or not, they've got to explain. It's really a lot of fun, it's kind of a story telling thing...we haven't done that in quite a while but we had several of those during the first couple of years. Traying, Druid traying was always a big thing...stealing trays, going out to Evan's hill, that resulted in several injuries... [laughs]

MS: We did [unintelligible] at the Nude Olympics in '92.

MW: Ah, the Nude Olympics, bah.

MS: I won the luge. But some of the other people, it rained the two previous nights and frozen into a solid sheet of ice but there was a warm rain which pock marked the surface of the ice and then it froze again and so it was like a giant cheese grater. [laughs]

MW: [laughs]

MS: It was a very bad choice of location but we did stick out through the end. Pretty nasty.

MW: I can imagine.

MS: That was Wade Davis, he was also an Aikido person, he organized it.

MW: Yeah, I know Wade. He's actually...Liz McDowell is one of the Druids that came through and she's now with Wade in Ann Arbor. She was my roommate for a year. Yeah, I know Wade pretty well. He's crazy.

MS: He got in so much trouble during Carleton.

MW: Yeah.

MS: He stole the bug. You know he did that?

MW: No.

MS: There used to be a giant centipede in the library lounge about twenty-five meters long, about two thousand pounds. He dismantled it one night, when no one was looking, took it out and reassembled it in the chapel.

MW: That's great.

MS: He got in trouble for that. He almost got kicked out.

MW: Wow.

MS: Oh yeah. He was behind most of the pranks back then. Now that we've talked a little bit about some of the activities, what do you think the reasoning behind all these activities is. Why do people want to go to Druid activities.

MW: We had a big discussion about this at one point. We were trying to classify the types of Druids. What we came up with...there are the spiritual Druids...the religious Druids. How about this way, we've got the religious Druids and that's the select few for whom Druidism is a religion that's there sole religion. Really don't have anything else. There aren't many of those. I'm one of the few. Irony was one. I think Ehren was one. And I don't know, in my time if there have

been any others. And then there are the spiritual druids, which are slightly different. They may have other religions. Unitarians or Christians or Buddhists or whatever they might be. And they come in because of their interest in spirituality and wanting to take part in it but not wanting it to be there driving religion. So that would be the next layer of druids. Then we've got the social druids. They come for the social group because they like the people, they like the activities, because it's fun. So that's what they come for. And then there are the Druids that come for free food. [laughs]

MS: [laughs]

MW: And they tend to show up at larger events, and they're sort of the sight seeing, food eating Druids. And they're all great and it's fun to watch because everybody's got their own level of involvement. There are the some of them that are there because that's what they believe, they've got this reason behind it and then there are the people that are there because they're very fascinated by it all because of the spiritual interactions that are going on and the activities relating to spirituality and other people are just like fun fun fun and then there are people with the free food. So it's, it's really great. And people will fluctuate between those, two. Sometimes the social ones will become the free food ones and go back to being social and then some times even step up to being spiritual. And it's very fluid.

MS: How would you describe Druidism to someone who doesn't know much about it?

MW: Oh, I've done it on so many occasions.

MS: What's your spiel?

MW: My spiel, all right...the Druids are a nature loving spiritual group, basically. And the only two things that I've been able to determine that they, as a whole, hold to be true, and even then they argue over them, are the two tenets; that being that the search for spiritual truth is an important and a life long search and the second one being that through a familiarity and closeness with natures, that's one way to further your search. If you believe those two things then you can call yourself a Druid, you're a Druid of the first order. Basically that's it. At Carleton at least, that's what it's been. And everyone comes in with their own take on things and it's not a religion unless you decide to make it so. But it's not not a religion. We had this, oh, there was an argument a while back between me and Chloe because my statement was 'Druidism is not a religion.' She said no that's not true. 'Well you can't just call it a religion because it's not a religion for everybody'. She's like 'But it's a religion.' So we can't really decide if we are a religion or a philosophy...I think that we're a spiritual group that likes nature. [laughs] And some times it's a religion.

MS: But if you think about it, most mainstream sects, I think you can probably find those kind of divisions in it too.

MW: Yeah.

MS: There are the people who really truly believe the doctrines of that church and there are some people who are just there because they have pot lunch afterwards.

MW: Yeah. It's true.

MS: Or because they think it's good for their job. There's a lot of reasons...

MW: Yeah.

MS: Motivations I think, people do attend the services. Is there anything beyond that for you?

MW: For me, yes. Druidism has become my religion. People ask me what my religion is, I say, well, I'm a Druid. Because I was Christian for a very long time but it just didn't mesh for me. Finally came to the conclusion that well, this is a whole thing with Christianity that they're right and that everybody else is wrong and should be converted and apparently...I've discovered that there are many Christian groups these days that don't hold that to be necessarily true and they don't feel like they have to convert everybody and that everybody else is wrong and going to hell if they're not Christian. But it's such a pervasive thing and there are so many things that you have to, you're expected to hold as definite beliefs that I hold more as, okay, that's fine, that could be true. I decided to leave the Christianity and I respected, I think, a lot of it, I know that the Christian ideals influence a lot of my beliefs and my ways of interacting with people but I decided it just wasn't going to work. So I said, alright, well, what am I going to be? Can't really be Jewish. You know, Islam isn't going to work for me. Buddhism just doesn't quite work either. Taoist, is, well, confusing, and... I went through, I was like I don't think I can just convert to another religion but I've got this Druid thing and the whole idea with the Druidism is...I'm searching for some sort of spiritual truth. I sat down one day and said well, that's what I'm doing. Must be, that's my religion. Because I've always spent time looking around and wanting to figure out how things work, why does this happen? What is behind this? Why do things interact in this way. Why, why, why, why, why... And ended up coming to the conclusion that I don't know and I'm never going to know but it doesn't matter that I don't know. At that point I wanted to just decide what works for because what works for everyone else is up to them. But what works for me is up to me. That was my goal. And when people found a religion that helped them to better themselves and put a certain amount of structure into their lives, that was a very important thing, very meaningful and I didn't think it mattered which particular way they chose to do it. Or even if they chose it...I mean if you don't choose a religion that doesn't mean that you're a bad person and it doesn't mean you're not going to be able to organize your life. You just might have a different system of working, or you might just be really confused [cracking up], and disorganized and have no idea what you're doing. I mean, it can go either way. There are plenty of people that have chosen a religion that are confused and disorganized and have no idea what they are doing and they're mean and they knock at people and they try to drive them off the road, and the road rage...I mean it's so much a personal thing is what I decided. I picked Druid because it allowed me that freedom to make it personal. I have my path and other people have theirs...and we can interact. But it doesn't mean that everybody else has to follow my path, nor do I have to follow any one else's.

MS: You've spoken a lot about the spirituality of it. Is there something more material in your Druidism?

MW: Well, I am a recycling Nazi. There are a lot of things along those lines that have become very...it's sort of the material manifestation of my Druidness is this idea of having respect for the earth. This idea of needing to find a balance amongst each individual when everything else is going around them. What that comes down to is...I recycle my cans and bottles and paper. I drive a car that has decent gas mileage. I walk when I can. I try to take care of the planet...pick up the litter when I'm walking around. It's just strange little things like that. That and yelling at my friends when they throw away plastic bottles. I blame that on my religion. There are definitely material things to it. When I am troubled I go to the circle or I go find a tree. Where some people would go to

church, they would go talk to their pastor, I go talk to the trees. It works for me, it works for me better. People are confusing...trees make sense. And the trees tend to give me better answers than people do. So...that works for me. There are also small ritualistic things, saying hello to the moon when I see it. Paying attention to the changes in the seasons. I get very frustrated at Carleton because I get so busy and so sleep deprived that I don't see things...I miss full moons completely. I sit there going, 'Oh we should have a full moon celebration this term,' except that the full moon was a week ago. I missed it, and there's not going to be another one until break

MS: [laughs] Yeah, I think that's one of the ideas behind awareness that sometime pops up in Druid literature. Just opening up and realizing what is there and your place and your relation with it and often we get tracked onto these plans and stuff that absorbs everything, all our attention and concentration and we miss a lot of things along the way that really should've been appreciated. What happens to Druids after Carleton? Are you at all worried about this?

MW: What happens to Druids when they leave Carleton?

MS: I see Carleton as being a very nurturing place for Druidism, don't you?

MW: Yes and no. Yes because it's open to that kind of thing and you can say 'I'm a Druid, I'm going to do my Druid thing,' and people are like, 'Really? You spend lots of time in the Arb, aren't you afraid you're going to get lost.' But it's a pretty open place to be something weird like a Druid. But at the same it's so intense and everyone's so busy all the time that you have this whole awareness problem and it's hard to go to tea every week when you have to finish your homework for the next day... In that way I'm really looking forward to leaving Carleton and having time to just sit and watch the flowers grow and think about what are my exact beliefs on this particular subject. Or read about other religions...I want to reread the Tao Te Ching, I haven't read it in ages. There's are things like that...I feel like, for me at least, my religion, my spiritual journey has come to sort of this stagnation because I've been so busy for so long, just spinning my wheels that I haven't had that time to grow myself personally and have my faith, or whatever you want to call it, grow. Because that requires work and contemplation and quiet time.

MS: New vistas, new people to interact with, new environments to brave...?

MW: That could also help but, for me...even just a month of not having to do much other than read books and walk in the woods, I think, would do amazing things for me. [laugh]

MS: I think you're talking about sabbatical, aren't you.

MW: Yeah, but, not a sabbatical of 'I'm going to go live in a cabin on top of a mountain for a while,' but, just stopping the frenzy that you get into at Carleton because you're a student, you're here to learn and once you get past your freshman and sophomore years you get into your major and your major requirements and your upper level classes and a lot of hard things. And you start having to look at what you're doing after Carleton and applying to grad schools and applying for jobs and looking for an apartment to live in. It's a whole big thing. You don't really have time for all that in between all the trying to turn in your assignments and trying to get enough sleep so you don't die and attempting to get your exercise and usually you've got at least three extracurricular activities that you're involved in. That's just hard. If I were a religion major maybe I'd have more time for thinking about these things because it would be along with my school work

to some extent. I do have some things that apply in my field. Science is a religion in itself. A fascinating one. I run into all sorts of things that I want to sit and ponder with the classes that I take but it's harder because the things that I want to sit and ponder aren't things that I can really apply to the actual school work. I can apply them to my life in all sorts of interesting ways but I can't put them into the paper, I can't put them into my lab report. 'Gee, this has an interesting corollary to this fascinating spiritual book that I read once,' you know, as a foot note and it's just not really going to work so well. So I think that Carleton is a good place for the Druids. I think that the group is small right now but I think it waxes and wanes. I think it'll get big again.

MS: One of the problems I've noticed, I've talked to many Druids after they've graduated over the years...they've always told me that the greatest problem with continuing the Druidic formula/system of operations is that no place is like Carleton, people are different. It's like starting over from scratch. You spend more time explaining what Druidism isn't than explaining what it is. Once you leave the communal atmosphere of Carleton which is basically like a monastery and you go to Grad school and you see somebody once a week for two hours and you're not living with them, you're not eating with them, you're not going to Folk dance with them, you can't get the level of intimacy you can find at Carleton. You'll see this not just with Carleton alumni but across the board, the college years are a very special period of time when you can build that [side ends]

MS:...this interview with a few more things. So, you're not at all worried about a period of loneliness at all, or perhaps never being able to have this kind of experience again.

MW: See, the thing is that the people that I was close to and developed those relationship with graduated last spring for the most part. So for me, this has been my transition, this year has been my lonely period. This was my year to sit there and go, 'Oh my goodness, my friends have all left. Who do I talk to, what do I do now.' I still have the Druids but they're all younger than me now. They're people that I know and I'm friendly with but they're not my...I'm not close to them in the way that I was close to the people that have gone away. So for me graduating is actually going to be... a liberation from that seclusion that I've been in for this year because I'll be going to a place where a lot of my friends live and I'll be having that community again...not the same way, but more so actually than I've been having it here. I am going to be sad to leave behind this place because it is a very special place and there's a lot that is going to change. There's not going to be so many nights of sitting up late, eating pizza, discussing philosophy. Because that just doesn't happen so much when people have jobs. But I've had five years of that. I've enjoyed it, I've savored it and I think it's ok that that period in my life is coming to an end. I think having this year has given me time to think about that. Like, 'Well, okay, this is the way life progresses.' We're having a lot of people who maybe didn't have this strange intermediate year that I've had... I know my friends that all graduated last year...they were upset, they were sad, everyone was leaving but for me, I'm sort of late and I'm following everybody. I'm way behind yelling 'Hey, wait for me, I'm coming.' So...no, I'm not too worried about it. I'm really looking forward to it because I think it's time for me to not be at Carleton anymore because a lot of the people here, I don't relate to them in the same way anymore, I'm not at that level of...you know, it's almost like I'm one foot out of the community already cause there is this whole community of monks or whatever it is here... I've started taking off my

monk's robes already. It's actually harder for me to sit and have these experiences with the people that are still in that mind set than it is for me to have experiences with people that have already moved out of it. So when I go off I think that the fact that the Druid thing has already become very personal for me...I think that'll be alright that I'm not going to have the little Druid community.

MS: You have a little portable version in you now?

MW: I think I've got a portable version at this point. I've been working on it for a long time and I've got...it's contained, it's good. So I think that I may find some church of some sort, I don't know...pick a religion and find a friendly group of people that are interested in things that I'm interested in and maybe I'll hang with them for a while and see what I can learn from them. As well as getting reacquainted with some of the friends that I haven't spent time with in a long time. And then just the quiet time with just me.

MS: Quiet time, yes, quiet time.

MW: It's good.

MS: Talk about outside. What kinds of...were there any outside influences on the Druids during your last four or five years. Any people who popped in or people or outside events that really changed or effected the Druid community at all.

MW: We've had a few townies, as far as outsiders, there was Rob for a while, and there's Doug, these days. And Julianne has been in and out. They're just kind of visitors. They're fun. They kind of pop in and are like, hey, what are you guys up to now. Spend our time together. Outside events...hmm...

MS: Thinks that [unintelligible] riled them up or...

MW: There was the loss of our north stone. That kind of riled us up. It just disappeared one day...somebody stole. We got it back so quickly that it was kind of confusing. We just...it took a while to adjust to the fact that that was actually a different stone.

MS: Have you had much difficulty with some of the Christian groups on campus or anything like that.

MW We really haven't.

MS: Because I know you went through the millennium period...

MW [laughs] Yeah, year two thousand, Y2K. No, I don't remember any difficulties there. We're on pretty good terms with all the other religious groups on campus. Not so much this year but last year we would occasionally try to get things happening with the Unitarians and the Druids simultaneously.

MS: I always called the Unitarians the indoor Druids.

MW: Yeah, they call us the outdoor Unitarians. [laughs]

MS: [laughs]

MW: That always amuses me. Actually there's been a little bit of difficulty with CRU, the Council for Religious Understanding because we've had Druids on that for, I don't even know how long.

MS: [unintelligible] '84, I think. Off and on.

MW: And there's actually no Druid on the Council at the moment. It was...well, Irony was on it back when I first got here. When he and I went for a little while then. When he graduated and I had to leave it was Ehren that took over. Chloe and Ehren both...they were in it for quite a while. Then Chloe left and I started going. So we had two Druids for quite some time. What ended up happening was that it got very frustrating for us and I think it got frustrating for a lot of the non-theistic, or non specifically theistic...basically for anyone that wasn't

Judeo-Christian. It got very frustrating in a lot of ways to continue going to CRU. It started off being a really fascinating and great thing to me but then we hit a certain barrier where we'd...the topics of conversation could only go so far and then we'd run into things of...they'd just start bringing in these topics of conversation that, I was slowly realizing...these have no application to the Druids, and then I'd start talking to the Unitarians...oh...there's no application for the Unitarians either. Or the Quakers. And the Hindu's are just kind of confused. A lot of little things where...it's really a wonderful thing to have, CRU, but it's difficult because it is started from this sort of Judeo-Christian perspective and, although they mean very well it gets hard because what they see as important and want to discuss, we can't quite relate to, but at the same time we have a very difficult time explaining to them that, 'Well, this just doesn't apply, this just isn't something that's useful for us. We're fine to talk about it as it applies to you but we can't talk about how it applies to us because it doesn't. That just got sort of difficult. I keep meaning to go in and talk to Carolyn about this, the Chaplain, because she's a wonderful lady and I think she likes the Druids, she sounds quite fascinated by us. I know that she's really...she very much wants to foster understanding amongst all of the groups on the campus. I think that she probably just hasn't realized that...where these difficulties come in. We had a progression of people. One of our people was Will. He's a philosophy major. He was actually there for the Buddhists rather than for us because he was in the Zen Meditation group. He ended up getting asked to leave because he was not communicating in a helpful way or something...the thing is that I was there and what we were hitting was this barrier of him saying that, well that doesn't mean anything to me, that doesn't apply to my life or my spirituality and trying to explain it and I think he came off as confrontational. He was not trying to be...I was present for some of what was happening and it was a matter of one person trying to explain, 'This means nothing to me' and the other person saying 'How, does it not mean anything to you?' 'There's nothing here to be discussed,' and then the frustration on both sides of 'We're not communicating here' and I felt bad because I could see, very much I could see where he was coming from and I could see where none of this was malicious on the other side. So we lost...Will was no longer able to be on CRU, I was very sick of being on CRU because we kept repeating topics and I'd been on it a long time. So I had left but we wanted to have somebody so we sent Corwin. Corwin went very dutifully and after a term emailed me and said 'You know, I really don't like this, it doesn't apply to us, I don't understand how we're supposed to communicate.'

We hit that a lot...trying to explain to people what we are and what we do and, no, that doesn't apply to us. They don't always understand. And we're almost as marginalized as the Christians on this campus sometimes because this campus is much cooler to be Jewish or Atheist or something that's not Christian. If you're Christian they're like, 'Oh, you're Christian,' [dismissive voice] But the Druids they kind of go to the other side. You're too far to the other end. You're strange and what you do isn't legitimate. I got very upset, actually, this fall because they were going to have a Tarot workshop in the Rec Center and it was supposed to be this fun thing, they were having somebody come in and they were going to tell how to do Tarot readings and do some readings and they canceled it at the last minute, the administration did, I'm not sure who was in charge. I never could figure out why. They said that it was because of the advertising, and it was something along the lines of that the advertising made it seem

like it could give you more concrete answers than it really could and that that wasn't something that Carleton should support. But I just found myself very insulted. I was like, 'Now, if you had been having...' they have so many discussions on various Christian ideals and various...oh, they had the evolution guy come in at one point and talk about how, he was the creationist guy and he was saying how Evolution was bull-honkey. They had him come in and nobody complained about that even though, how is a guy coming into say how God created the world and all of it's inhabitants anymore scientific and concrete than somebody coming in and explaining how to do Tarot readings and the history of it and the ideas of what it can accomplish. I don't see any difference there. To me, Tarot has played a part in my spirituality. It's something that means something to me. For me it's a ritual to do and it helps me order my thoughts. It's like prayer would be for some people or saying a rosary would be for a Catholic. Basically they said 'Oh, this is something that's just not legitimate and we can't have that' and got rid of it with no notice what so ever. I was just like, wow...if I were an actual organized religion I could make such a stink about this. But I can't really...and I'm not sure what to do. A lot of us talked about it amongst ourselves, we never did decide who we should talk to or who we could say anything to about how we were really sort of insulted and wished that they kept that, or something.

MS: When you say organized...you're a funded group on campus, right?

MW: Yes

MS: You've got a charter, a constitution in, hold regular meetings, officers, elections. Was there any kind of communal arrangements made to stay in the same dorms together.

MW: No.

MS: No...

MW: No. We did have second Myers once...had almost all of the Druids on it, but that was just by virtue of all of us being friends and a lot of...I ended up, I lived in Goodhue that year. But, there were two of the three Archdruids lived on second Myers that year and a lot of the people. But as far as like a Druid house or anything of that sort...no, we've never done anything of that sort. No we've never done that.

MS: Too organized?

MW: People always have different goals of where they want to live, what kind of living arrangements they want and...besides, I think if we spent all of our time together we'd hate each other.

MS: Quite possibly.

MW: That's my take, I don't know.

MS: There's pretty amazing things that happened over at Farmhouse back in the eighties, clothing optional house was, I think, the official name. There was a lot roommate changes over a period of a couple years.

MW: There was Religious Diversity house, that one year, and that kind of went up in smoke.

MS: Yep...

MW: Religious animosity house, is what we tend to recall... refer to it these days.

MS: Time to wrap up with a couple questions like...now that you're departing and have only six weeks left, what would the key pieces of advice you would leave behind to bequeath your wisdom onto the next generation.

MW: Recruit, recruit, recruit at the beginning of the year. You got to get freshman interested before everybody else gets them interested. I think the main reason we're so small this year is because we fell down in the recruiting this fall. I was recruiting for Assassins and left the two new guys to recruit. They didn't recruit hard enough because they'd never done it before. That would be number one because otherwise you lose the numbers and then it's really hard to do things. Number two would be...stay friendly with all the administration. The best and easiest way to get things done. If they see you as a responsible organized group of people they will respond to you so much better than if they think you're a bunch of crazy freaks that are just going to leave messes everywhere. I think...be friendly and open is the main thing...if you're in charge of things. Pay attention to who comes to things, try to remember names...be aware of what's going on because the best way to insure that the Druids are going to do well and have people that keep coming is if they see you as a friendly and welcoming group. That kind of falls to the leaders to go up and say, 'Why hi Bob, I'm glad you came again, how are you doing.' Whenever they show up. If you fall down on that and you're all just talking amongst yourselves when new people come in and they sit there and they're like 'Oh, I don't know anybody and I'm bored,' they leave and then they don't come back again. But if they come and your nice and you talk to them and you ask them, hey, so what's your major... [laughs] then they feel like, 'Ok, that was fun, I liked that, I'll bring my other friend next time. Then you get more people and the more people it is the more fun it is. The more the merrier, that's the way it goes. I love when we have a huge group of people somewhere. It spreads out the workload, it gives you tons of new people to talk to and it's just fun, and you can plan more things.

MS: Anything to avoid?

MW: Don't do Morris dances that involve sticks in the dark. We made that mistake once. I don't think anybody got hurt. That'd be the main one.

MS: So you're final [unintelligible] next couple of years for the Druids, stay on course, steady as usual...

MW: Yeah, I think they're doing ok. Steve-o and Corwin know what they're doing. They just need to be assertive about grabbing people and bringing them in. They're on top of things. They've been there and helping with all of the events since their freshman years. Corwin's a sophomore and Steve-o's a junior. They know, they've been there. Corwin is setting up a sweatlodge for the first time himself, tonight, or being in charge of setting it up.

MS: Who's going to lead it?

MW: That's a good question. Steve-o probably, I've been teaching him how to go about leading things, I think he led one this fall and did fine. I would lead one but I'm sick and I don't think I'm going to be sweating tonight. If Ehren sweats he may lead one. I don't know if he will though because we're going out for dinner tonight. Sweating on a full stomach is going to be interesting.

MS: Alright, that seems to be about all the questions I can think of right now so I think we're going to close the interview officially now and thank you very much for listening, we appreciate it.

Interview with David Fisher '65 Founder of Reformed Druidism

August 27, 2004.

Speaker Phone.

DF = David Fisher

MS = Mike Scharding



Michael Scharding: Question number one. Introduce yourself, tell us who you are and where you're from and what it was like when you were growing up

David Fisher: I'm David Fisher. I was born in San Bernadino, California, but raised in a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri, called Webster Groves. Webster Groves was a typical middle class American, Midwestern suburb. I attended grade school there and then attended high school at the St. Louis country day school before going to Carleton College.

MS: What would you say your parents backgrounds are?

DF: You mean background in terms of what, education?

MS: Education, religion, or cultural interests?

DF: My father was raised on a farm in a small town called Foley Missouri and went to Westminster College in Fulton where he graduated in sociology. He spent his career as, mostly, manufactures representative although he had also auto management as a purchasing agent and the director of a small company. My mother was born in Cape Toronto, Missouri. She went to Sweet Burner College but did not complete college. She majored in Latin and in English. Both of them were interested in current events; my mother more than my father. My father enjoyed classical music a great deal. They were both active in the Presbyterian church, of which they were active members. Both were deacons in that church. My father became an elder later in his life.

MS: So you'd say that your parents were, perhaps, future role models for you?

DF: I think so. They both stressed the value of higher education. My grandfather was also a role model. My grandfather Dearthmont. He was an attorney and became chief council in Missouri Pacific Railroad and eventually president of that railroad. He was very interested in discussing current events

and issues and when we went to his house for dinner on Sundays we would typically have such discussions.

MS: So you were always being introduced to new ideas and kept fresh with the changing of the times?

DF: Yes that's true.

MS: As a child did you have any tendency towards pranks or have a sense of humor in your family?

DF: Oh, no more than usual I suppose. My brother and I both enjoyed a good laugh and so forth. I can't remember anything specific.

MS: Ok. What kinds of clubs and activities were you involved in when you were in high school?

DF: I was involved in the debate club, eventually became vice-president of that, also involved in singing, glee club I believe. I was a manager of the cross country team in high school. For a while I was active in the Order of DeMolay but that was only for about two years.

MS: Is that like Freemasonry?

DF: Yes, Freemasonry. My father was an active freemason and encouraged me to do that, so I did.

MS: I'm not very familiar with Freemasonry, how would you describe that.

DF: I think it's a combination of social service and boys gathering to bond with each other, engage in some rather harmless rituals. To be honest with you it's been so long I can't really remember much. It tells you the impression it made that it only lasted a year. I decided not to go on for the higher whatever. It was too silly.

MS: So, how did you come around to picking Carleton? What were you looking for in a college?

DF: I was looking for a good education. My parents strongly encouraged me to look at Carleton. I had applied and been accepted at Kenyon College. Both my parents said, 'look, you've been to an all boys' high school, we think you should go to a co-ed college.' I think that was a good decision.

MS: So did you visit Carleton before you applied?

DF: Yes I did.

MS: You did. Was there anything that cinched it for you?

DF: I really can't remember. I'd been accepted at Kenyon, as I said, and at Westminster, my fathers alma mater. I was on the waiting list at Harvard. I eventually did get in but decided I didn't want to go to a big school, that I would rather be at a small school and that's why I went to Carleton.

MS: What were your early memories of Carleton, like the transition from home, your clubs, I believe you were a member of the radio station and such?

DF: Yes, I was very active in K-A-R-L; I think it would be fair to say that was my primary activity, secondary activity was players, the theater group. Both of those were very important to me at Carleton. The first year, like many freshman, I tried to find my way. I remember feeling a bit lost at the beginning. But I also remember finding an activity I could relate to in the radio station and in theater. Both which were, as I say, important to me.

MS: Would you say the radio activity was an outgrowth of your interest in current events?

DF: Yes...yes. I was always interested in current events and public speaking, debate. I'd been to the debate club in high school so this was a chance to continue those interests.

MS: Any of the other future Druid members also in the KARL club.

DF: Neither of the two co-founders, Norman Nelson and Robert Larson, neither of them were, I think, active in KARL. I think Norman, from my vague memory, and Bob may have both been on the fringe of players but it's been a long time.

MS: How would you describe the early '60s?

DF: Time of transition. I think it would be fair to say that most of us at Carleton had no doubt at all that we would eventually find a place, a job as good or better than our parents. We had confidence, which is not the case now. What we were concerned about was finding meaningful work, something that we would find not only enjoyable but worthwhile. And when the war began to preoccupy us all, and the civil rights struggle, for many us this became a focus of our energy and attention.

MS: Ok. You mentioned the civil rights act and the cold war, how much apart of that was daily life at Carleton?

DF: At the beginning, not much. There was a chapter of STF and there was a chapter of the civil rights group. Both of those constantly encouraged the rest of us to be more active. I suppose, partly because I was involved in radio and was doing a lot of news broadcasting I decided not to get involved, but to be an observer, although I was sympathetic to both causes. There was also a fair play for Cuba committee. People like Ben Starr. And others were certainly active leaders in those movements. But you ask was it part of our daily fare? No, no it wasn't. We were taking classes and involved in activities and Carleton was a fairly all consuming activity.

MS: What would you say your favorite classes at Carleton were?

DF: Oh, that's hard. I think I really valued my history classes with Catherine Boyd. Medieval history, Russian history, Byzantine History. I enjoyed the classes with Carlton Qualey (sp?) although I didn't find American history then as fascinating as European history. Ironically, although I now teach philosophy, I didn't find the philosophy courses all that stimulating. Martin Eschelmann (sp?) was about the most boring teacher I've ever had. A good man, but a rigid analytic thinker and Kantian. Philosophy at Carleton at the time was analytic, not continental and therefore from my point of view, boring. So I took the classes, minored in Philosophy but, at the time didn't make much impression on me.

MS: What was your major?

DF: History.

MS: Do you remember your comps project?

DF: Yes I do, it was a philosophy of history project. I compared Crochet (Sp?) and Collingwood on philosophy of history, and I actually still have the thing somewhere floating around. Although I have not taught philosophy of history professionally more than once or twice it remains an interest.

MS: I guess one topic that was current at Carleton at the time was the en loco parentis rules. How were those changing and what events led up to the Druids taking on one of those rules?

DF: Very interesting time. I think Carleton suffered from the blessings of being liberal. John Nason, bless his heart, was a sincere philosophically inclined Quaker. A decent guy, a little uptight. Not inclined to suffer fools gladly and he hated the idea of being repressive. Of course, you can't be totally without any kind of rules and students, especially some of the more radically students pushed the envelope wherever they could in things like personal dress or even personal hygiene.

There were protests about many things, but among them protests about the religious requirement. Sure enough, eventually, of course, as you know, it was dealt with by a responsible group of students who met and endlessly discussed it until it eventually became a non issue. We, at the time, had a choice of a Sunday evening program, which was basically culture, or going to college chapel service; that was actually pretty good, David Maitland is a fine preacher and the choir was excellent.

MS: I've done an interview with Maitland before.

DF: Yea, very bright. Very powerful preacher. Or you could go to town, one of the churches in town, but you had to do one of those things and many people thought that was too much. So the way the Druids got started, I've tried to tell this to other people who've called me and listened to me over the years; it's really very simple, one night Norman Nelson, Howard Cherniack, and myself were having one drink too many and were trying to figure out what we could do to deal with this requirement which we all thought was fairly silly and we decided, because I'd been reading something in one of my history classes about the ancient druids, why don't we start a group called the Reformed Druids of North America. What we tried to set up was essentially a Hobson's choice. If the college gave us credit for attending these ridiculous services we would expose them for the farce they certainly were. If they didn't give us credit we would protest about religious oppression and lack of decency. That is how it began. It was a bunch of guys sitting around, having a drink, having a joke. It was not due to any kind of mystical experience, any kind of transcendental moment. All the things that people keep saying must have been the case just were not the case.

MS: Do you think this is how some other religions have started?

DF: Oh, I wouldn't presume to know. I have no idea. But certainly, I think, it would be fair to say that the Druids, at least in terms of the founders, Howard, Norman, and myself were not meant as a serious alternative to religion. We just didn't think of it that way. We thought of having a good time, we sort of dreamed a piece up here and a piece up there, improvising as we went along the way people I suppose sometimes do. That's how it started.

MS: Ok, lets talk about a couple of those pieces here. I've interviewed about fifteen previous Arch Druids at Carleton and they all have the same questions.

DF: Yes?

MS: One of the things, where did you find/come up with the idea of the druid sigil.

DF: I believe I had read texts such as Jessie Weston, and also Frazer. I'd taken Intro Religion and Intro World Religions and had more than a passing interest in English history and knew something about the Arthurian material. It's very hard to reconstruct all this time later what precise texts I may have read at the time. But that was the general kind of the material. I think, if I were going to be very accurate I would say that there were essentially two foundations of the druids at Carleton. There was the one that was started by Norman, Howard, and myself je n'ai spree (sp?), which, you know, became more than a je n'ai spree because, if you do something week after week its hard to maintain a farce. We began to be a little more reflective and meditative; brought in some poetry, some song. Peter Basquin composed a very nice chant. That continued through my time at Carleton. Then when I was on the way to a graduation, David Frangquist came and expressed a strong interest in moving from mere casual participation to leadership. And, my memory is that

David went on a vigil and had some kind of either visionary experience or at least deeply meaningful personal experience. Something transpired that moved him, whether his heart was strangely warmed or his mind was strangely expanded, I don't know. What I do know is that when we went through a ceremony of ordination David became the next Arch Druid. I think it would be fair to say that he refounded the Druids.

MS: I would agree with that.

DF: He essentially took what had been a protest against religion requirement and an occasional exercise in pantheistic speculation and turned it into, if not a religion, something like a religion. And, when I've gotten letters and emails from successor Arch Druids I've always said the same thing: if you have a question about the meaning of this ask David.

MS: David's very charismatic.

DF: Because, yeah, I think it served a need for him in a way that it may not have some of the rest of us. That's the best of my recollection but I've tried to get these...it's been very embarrassing actually over the years to get these strange messages from these people who take it quite seriously and who ask me for guidance when I have absolutely no interest in continuing to guide anything. I mean I'm happy that they're happy and I don't want them to be depressed or anything but neither do I feel called upon to lead the Reformed Druids or guide the Reformed Druids.

MS: I understand that. Usually when each succeeding Arch Druid, there's about forty of them now...

DF: Oh my lord.

MS: Yeah, it's a long series, I was number thirty. When one Arch Druid leaves it's pretty much an unspoken rule that you disappear for a few years and let the next Arch Druid do their own thing, start over from scratch, so to speak.

DF: Yeah, I've heard reports over the years that it's, they've told me that it's changed from year to year.

MS: Yeah.

DF: It's been different things for different peoples.

MS: Yeah, some people go on a Native American angle, so people go Zen. A couple of the groups over in California, spin-offs from Larson's, have pretty much found it sufficient for its own purposes and just stayed with it and so they've gone on a Celtic angle and stayed with it for many years. So it's pretty much systematized and become permanent. But, Carleton has always been such a rotational kind of grove that nothing stays for more than two or three years. Just the spirit gets passed on, not much of the customs.

DF: Hm. I also remember John Messenger being fascinated as an anthropologist in this local phenomenon on his own campus and trying to study it, interviewing some of us, and I remember, oh goodness, it must have been twenty years ago, running into Carlton Qualey (Sp?) at some meeting and him asking me, David, didn't study about Joseph Smith? The implication being, I suppose, that one should've thought ahead. And at the time neither three of us really thought ahead. I think Howard, if I remember correctly, ended up being a lawyer, practicing in Canada, probably took it the least serious.

MS: Right. He seemed more interested in the protest.

DF: Yes, that was Howard. Norman, I think, was ambivalent. Like myself, Anglican, Episcopal. I don't that Norman went on and entered the ministry or not.

MS: He's now a deacon.

DF: He's a deacon. Which does not surprise me. A permanent deacon?

MS: Yes.

DF: Yeah, and I'm a priest. I suppose those ritual impulses took that course. And that's where it is. It's been, on the one hand, interesting to watch something that one started take on a life of its own utterly beyond any extent that any of us could have ever imagined. None of us imagined this thing would last more than four or five years. And as I say I think its largely through David's charisma and David's dedication in refounding it.

MS: Yeah, cause it's collapsed a couple times along the way.

DF: Yeah, I've heard that. I've heard that David has had some role or other in assisting it.

MS: Well, yeah. Usually there's three or four old Arch Druids who look after the group.

DF: Yeah.

MS: And they check in every couple years and if its not there they show up and find a couple interested students and then they leave again.

DF: Huh.

MS: And the group just... It's kind of liking shocking a battery in a car.

DF: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MS: You've just got to shock it once in a while.

DF: Well, I suppose, given people's need for alternative spiritualities, the Druids are like a template on a word processor that can be filled in with a number of contents and I suppose that's a good thing. At least I'm not sad for it, I just want good news some times and I get letters addressed 'Dear Reverend Brother in the Mother.' But that's life.

MS: Going back to one of the earlier origin points. So you're not quite sure where the symbol came from?

DF: No, I'm really not. I'm not sure whether that was Howard or Norman or myself. It just seemed the closing of the circle with two lines through it meant something.

MS: Kind of resembles a greek letter.

DF: Yes, yes it did.

MS: I think it's phi.

DF: Yes, it does indeed. I was learning a little bit of Greek then. It could have been the idea of Sola Sofia mother wisdom.

MS: Oh, that makes sense.

DF: It could have been that. It also had, for some people, affinities to the peace sign. The idea of closing the circle is certainly a major notion of world mythology so it could be that. To be honest with you I just don't know. I don't think Norman or Howard would know. We all used it, it made perfect sense to us at the time and danged if I could figure out how it happened, it just happened, like everything else.

MS: We've gone through a couple books of symbols and no one else has ever used it before; something so simple.

DF: Maybe it's just the creativity of, I guess I must've dreamed it up but I don't know where it came from.

MS: One of the other mysteries is the origins of Dalon Ap Landu.

DF: That, I think, was a phrase discovered by Norman, or by someone else, a member of the Druids, in their research, as a

phrase meaning lord of the groves. And we adapted it. I can't honestly remember who it was that dug that up.

MS: That's another one that kind of went like a snark quest. A couple people have gone through books of dictionaries and books of mythology and of course they're never able to find it.

DF: Nope. Someone dug it up but, you know, I can't remember which Druid it was that may have done that or not. I just remember someone came up with it and we all thought it was a good idea so we add it.

MS: Actually its kind of fun because, since there is no origin for it, it's also very flexible for usage.

DF: Yep. Like everything else.

MS: You mention before that you were studying Norse and Celtic mythology. Before expounding it and I believe Frangquist also did some research.

DF: Yes. I believe David probably did more because, as I say, he got very serious about it and, having decided he wanted to be part of this he'd better find out more about the implications and off he went. But I don't know what David read because we haven't been in contact for years.

MS: I'm pretty sure of what he read because when I was doing my own research I found his name in all the books I was reading.

DF: Well, I wouldn't doubt it. That would make sense.

MS: Also, one of the things that happened when they were making the Green Book, of Meditations...

DF: Yep.

MS: We have noticed that most of the selections that you contributed were actually from the Hindu texts.

DF: Yes. I did have a copy of hymns and Rig Veda, arguably one of the oldest texts of Religious tradition in the world. And so yes, I used that.

MS: I think the other David was more interested in Zen.

DF: Yes, that's true.

MS: Which was actually quite popular at the time.

DF: Yeah, yeah. Very much so. The Carleton in Japan program, Bardwell Smith teaching in comparative religion was an influence, I think, on many people.

MS: The concept of vigiling...was that taken from medieval literature?

DF: I think that was either, I can't remember whether it was I or Norman, the idea that one had a vigil before one would enter into some serious calling, like knighthood. One of us came up with that idea. All I remember is, no one really being very excited about it except David. He really wanted to try it out and indeed that's what he did.

MS: We were also thinking, is it the Catholic priesthood they vigil before their ordination?

DF: Yeah, that's true.

MS: That's where we figured that came from.

DF: Yeah, I think probably either Norman or I, both of us interested in medieval literature and medieval history would have remembered that. But again, I didn't take notes at the time because, obviously, I didn't think I was founding something for thirty, forty years.

MS: One of the things that happened in the first year is that you, they set up ten orders, or they tried to.

DF: Tried to.

MS: Tried to. I think they got as far as seven before they got tired.

DF: Yep.

MS: I believe that's the same number of orders that's in Scottish masonry.

DF: You know, ten just seemed like a good number.

MS: Ten's always a good...but

DF: *Laughing*. I'm sorry to be disillusioning but it just...it seemed like a good number. I suppose we were fascinated with the ideas of levels, of hierarchies. In the literature of science fantasy, things like Tolkienn and others there's the idea of levels of adeptness and wisdom. I must admit we were all readers of science fiction or science fantasy so that must have had some impact on us. But again, I don't know because we didn't go about annotating what we were doing.

MS: David during his first year put together the Chronicles...

DF: Yes.

MS: What did you think of that.

DF: I thought it was pretty fun.

MS: Yeah, I thought so too.

DF: I mean, it'd be the mock old English and the laying it out in columns like biblical texts was funny. The level of imaginative reconstruction, shall we say, was high. So I thought it was a pretty good piece of work, it was funny. It was funny for me at least to read. I don't know how Norman reacted to it, but I thought it was pretty funny.

MS: Let's see here, early missionary activities. Norman, I think, set up the first out of Carleton Grove.

DF: I remember hearing that, yeah.

MS: David also did one.

DF: Yep.

MS: And I think you set up something in New York for a while.

DF: Oh, I thought about it. It really never got off the ground. I think the Basquins, Peter and Katie, tried to do that. But they were busy establishing themselves professionally. I was busy and so it never really took off.

MS: From that activity the idea of forming a council developed.

DF: Yes. I suppose at that time I felt somewhat responsible having started the ball rolling down the hill to offer what helpful observations I could. So I didn't disagree with the council and, early on at least, continued to try to exercise some benign influence on it.

MS: One of the fun things about the council is that nothing has really been done with it since '71 after the priestess issue was finished.

DF: Yep, I heard that.

MS: Mainly because no ones been able to find everybody, or able to get a unanimity on the issues.

DF: Not surprising.

MS: People were afraid that...like during the '70s that if it could become a majority one then it might actually become functional. And the more it said the less it would be Druidical. As you said before, sometimes less is more in the way of organization.

DF: Where two Druids are gathered together there are at least three opinions.

MS: I think that's now pretty much a legend actually. Everyone has said that at least once so far in their interviews. So, it was set up and groves started to spring up around the country, and disappeared almost as frequently.

DF: Yep.

MS: How would you describe the other founders in character? Like, for example Larson, or Nelson.

DF: Oh gosh, that's a hard question. I really wouldn't want to presume. I think of all of us, Howard certainly, from the very beginning, I think, saw this as a vehicle for social protest and as it became obvious that people were taking it seriously...I don't think he was so much irritated as just bemused. Sort of as in, 'what on earth is happening? Don't these people understand how this started? Are they all insane?' And we explained to Howard, 'no, people are not insane; they're just taking it a different direction.' Norman, I think, found it more significant, very early on. I'm not quite sure how. And I certainly found myself moved by the way in which something that had started as a good natured way of trying to challenge authority had become a source for some people, at least, of meaning and significance. And I felt responsible for that. If people were finding something of meaning it, even if I personally didn't, it seemed to me inappropriate to do anything that would undermine those individual's quest for value and meaning.

MS: I can understand that.

DF: Although it was often to pummel me, something as amorphous and as non-defined would do that. I mean Zen, after all, which you mentioned, and Hinduism are both traditions that have long histories and considerable literature and a very very strong discipline of practice. Certainly in Zen that's true. And it's true in Hinduism in terms of ritual. The Druids never made those kinds of demands on people. So it always is puzzling to me that something which made so little demand on anyone would fill the needs of someone, but apparently it did. So, there we are. I don't have much more than that to add about my cofounders except that I'm sorry to hear about Bob.

MS: How would you say that your observations of early spread of Druidism ties in with your understanding of Christianity started.

DF: Well, the only similarity I can think of is that Christianity emerged in the Hellenistic period and a syncretistic environment in which there was a mixing of many different religious ideas. And certainly our culture, in the '60s and '70s was highly syncretistic. Not multi-cultural in the contemporary sense but syncretistic in the sense there was an interest in overlooking traditional boundaries and finding something meaningful that would not necessarily be as constraining. There were a lot of things going on, so to the extent that the cultures were similar, I think that's the link. I don't think it's the link in terms of the rather highly evangelical character of the first Christian missionaries. And the first urban Christians simply were not, from what I can read about them, that much like the first Reformed Druids.

MS: For me I think the Druids have pretty much been there and people came to them.

DF: Yep.

MS: And people left just as quickly.

DF: Yep.

MS: So, in that sense I think that they're different, they don't have a driving mission to make more Druids.

DF: No.

MS: Though like you said, if they show up you feel obligated.

DF: It is true. I think the druids have met a need for a lot of people.

Side 2

MS: We've got about ten questions left.

DF: I think the Druids essentially fill the need for people looking for meaning who are not ready at that particular point in their life to make the kind of commitment that most institutional religion demands. That's what they do. They offer a placeholder that may be filled later by something that's more sustaining, more involving, more definitive. I think that's good. That's the Druids at their best.

MS: Yeah, I've always described it as being a way station along the road.

DF: Yep, that's what it is.

MS: Also, I've seen it more as Norman describes. He describes it more as a supplement rather than a supplanting.

DF: That's something he, I remember early on, said that. I think the only danger with something like the Druids is that, for some people, it becomes an excuse for staying in spiritual kindergarten the rest of their life. It was never meant, by any of the founders, certainly—I don't even think David—it was never meant to be a genuine alternative world religion. We didn't set it up that way. It has no doctrine to speak of except a vague kind of pantheistic matron theology. It has very little ethical importance, except sort of benign concern for nature and ecology. Perhaps some pacifism. It has no notion of divinity other than a pantheistic one, or panentheistic one. So it wasn't meant to be a replacement for religion. I think meant at its best to help people on their way find something, but then they should move on. If someone stayed a Druid all his or her life that would be unfortunate from my point of view.

MS: I've only known a couple people, mostly in California, who pretty much stayed only in Druidry. Most people go on to find another religion and usually with a renewed appreciation for nature.

DF: Which is great. If the Druids do that then they've done their job.

MS: That's what I think.

DF: And frankly if that's what the Druids are then I don't feel so bad about what happened. You know, I've said to many Arch Druids before, it's a weird thing that something that you start take on such a life of its own. But I guess in some ways, really, what I said to you earlier really remains true. It was restarted by David and so whatever it is now, it's as much his work as it is mine.

MS: I have a couple question for you now.

DF: Ok.

MS: At the end of Carleton, you were starting to feel a greater certainty of vocation.

DF: Yep.

MS: How would you describe how that developed and how you made the transition to seminary?

DF: I was given the Rockefeller fellowship, called trial year ministry. It was meant for people like me, at the time, who thought they might be interested in the ordained ministry but weren't sure. I discovered in union was that, at the time at

least, I was not ready to commit myself to full time ordained ministry. I was ready to commit to teaching. And then I got the call to England, frontier in terms of missionary duty. It became even clearer that I was called to teach, although I didn't ask for work in England as a lay person. I mean the question was what, a whole year of philosophy at St. Louis U. was not the life I'd hoped as it would be and I went to Vanderbilt. It was only while doing a PhD at Vanderbilt in the department of religion, systematic philosophical theology, that I really decided that I also wanted to seek ordination. I was working then in the student chapel, with the Reverend John Hatcher, who was a philosophical complex, very good, person. At one point he said, 'David, if you're gonna play the shaman's role you might as well wear the shaman's rank. You might as well do the process (hard to hear next piece).'" But it didn't happen over night. After many conversations with John I found, yeah, that was something with a meaning to me and it has been for the rest of my professional career.

MS: What do you define as a vocation?

DF: Vocation is a direction towards which one feels pulled or sometimes I supposed is pushed. It centers one's life and gives purpose.

MS: Here's a broad question for you; what is the role of religion in life.

DF: You know, I think it's as fundamental, as Tillich said, as the depth dimension of culture. Religion in a culture is what expresses what is spirit in that culture. And at the same time is institution. I think religion helps people direct themselves toward that energy and transform it. What I mean by that is that while there may well be mysterious spiritual depth working in any culture, it takes an active institution with a tradition, a text, a discipline to turn that amorphous spirituality into practical action, into moral imperatives, into concerns for peace and justice, for tolerance and understanding. That's the kind of thing, I think, that at its best, religion does. It transforms what is vague and morphous and unspecific into something that is quite specific with very clear implications for how people live their life.

MS: And when does religion go wrong?

DF: I think religion goes wrong when it thinks, or its leaders think, I admit, or adherents think that they have the final absolute answer to all questions and ought to impose those answers on other people. Certainty is a fine thing. Thinking that gives you license to impose your certainty on someone else is a bad idea because if it doesn't grow from within it's not your own. Everything I know about religion says that you can offer, you can entice, you can lead, you can suggest, and almost (????) in words, but you can't make someone else have whatever you find significant. They have to find it themselves.

MS: What is the role of nature in religion as you understand it?

DF: Well it's something that, at least in Christianity, is seen as an expression of creative love and requiring creative care. That's the simplest way I can describe it. What has been created and given in love ought to be cared for with love, fostered, nurtured, not harmed. And that's about as clear as I can make it. I know there's a lot of talk about creationist spirituality from Eraneus (sp?) to the present and I think that's a good dimension of our spiritual heritage. But in general I think that's what it is. Nature is after all the vehicle through which the spirit moves and expresses itself.

MS: Do you think that people in bygone ages had a better understanding or appreciation than they do now?

DF: No. I just think that probably people have less mediated lives. The culture we live in is a highly mediate one. We interact through electronic means, through a very abstract symbolic language, and through very complex institutions. And people like me spend most of their lives interacting in that world of secondary or tertiary or even quaternary symbolism. No, I don't think we are any better or worse than our ancestors. We are certainly less driven, but every now and then we get reminded, from hurricanes or from plagues that nature remains a force that is not totally mastered for our disposal. But no, the difference is we're mediated in more ways than I think our ancestors were. At least the mediation has more layers, that's a better way of saying it.

MS: And I think that's one thing that Druidry tries to do is bring you to a primary experience.

DF: Yep. Best regarded religion. Every religion I know insists that there is the difference between the thinking about the experience and the institution organization for the experience and the texts recording the experience, and the experience. And whether it's in worship or meditation or reading or prayer...yeah, the plan of the whole apparatus is to nurture and sustain that experience.

MS: Ok. Well after you were ordained, where did you go onto?

DF: Oh, the rest of my story is fairly boring. I was ordained and for the last thirty years I have always combined serving as an interim pastor, assistant, a long term supply priest while I've been teach. So, I've had two parallel careers. One as a teacher and one as a...mostly interim pastor. I'm now out of that business as they say. I am now working as an assistant in a parish, very happy to do that. At this point in life I do not fill drawn to solving the kind of problems that come with interim ministry. I've more than enough to do with my teaching and my other vocational interests.

MS: What's interim ministry?

DF: Interim ministry mean's you're the person in charge of the parish between a full time pastor. It mean's you're the one who provides services, does some ministration, some counseling. And while I could do that with, I think, some grace when I was twenty or thirty or forty, even fifty, I'm now sixty, and I simply don't have the energy or the drive to do that on a full time other job. It's a lot of work and it's a lot of not just showing up and going through the motions. People ask you lots of questions. They need to express this stuff. Sometimes they'd been hurt, sometimes they'd been confused, sometimes they feel abandoned. What you have to do as the interim is find all that anxiety. It's a very interesting and creative challenge but I've done thirteen of them in my life and that's enough.

MS: How have your other Carleton clubs or experiences continued over the years also.

DF: Really not at all. I went to one alumni reunion with my wife who's also Carleton. It was ok. We talked about going this year, decided not to. I think next year's my fortieth and I'm thinking about going next year. But I have very little contact at all with anyone from Carleton. Just have drifted out of contact. And while I find the campus beautiful and attractive I know enough, having been in higher education all my life, to know that, whatever they say, you can't go home again. If I went back I would be with a bunch of strangers who I wouldn't recognize whose lives may have been interesting but certainly with whom I've not been in touch. And I don't know if I'll go back or not; I'm thinking about that. If I do and if there's still a Druid there maybe we could talk. We'll

see. At this point I've been teaching overseas in the summer the last two years, I may do a third year, so...

MS: How does religion change as you grow older?

DF: Yes it does. You find less need to cross certain bows, the minor things and to qualify and footnote. It becomes more a matter of direction, focus. It really is true that less is more. That's not just a Zen notion; it's true I think in all religions. You reach a certain point in your life when you no longer feel as obsessed with, as you did, what turn out to be very minor differences in theory or practice, you are more interested in the bigger picture and that is where I am.

MS: As the years go on and we start to lose more and more Druids, how would you like to be remembered?

DF: Oh, I hope I've some degree of affection. If nothing else, appreciation for having started something that others have made their own. I've not maintained an active tie with Druidism because sometimes the leadership has seemed very strange to me. I'm not a Neopagan and I find that very strange. And I find sometimes the intensity has been a little overwhelming, sometimes its been confusing. You want to say, well, what's going on here. It's sort of a feeling I suppose Howard would have felt all those years ago. I'm grateful that it's been meaningful to people and as long as that's remembered that's perhaps enough. I certainly don't think of myself as worthy of a plaque or an obelisk or anything of the kind. If anyone deserves that it's David.

MS: Over at the Monument Hill there's an obelisk there. Three sides talk about the first baptism, first church service and the first marriage in Minnesota and the fourth side is completely blank. I believe you remember Richard Shelton...

DF: Yeah.

MS: He's always told me that the fourth side describes Druidism.

DF: That's a good monument. I would say and often said *si monumentum quies perspicere*: if you seek my monument look around you. Look at the oak tree. We chose that because there were oaks there. We knew, even with the little research as we had done, we knew there was always a link between the Druids and the oaks and we built that first altar which was torn down by a bunch or rather angry, inebriated, I think intervarsity types, and I understand that it's been rebuilt and rebuilt and so forth a number of times since. But yeah, the oaks really were the grove, it wasn't the physical stones, that was nice, but the stones weren't as important as the trees. Makes some sense.

MS: Ah, trees are a symbol of movement, of growth, of change, not of permanence.

DF: Yeah, that's true.

MS: A couple of final questions.

DF: Ok. This is good because I have to get going to pack, leaving for England on Wednesday.

MS: Ok. During the 1960s and early '70s the Druids had to decide on the priestess issue and this was also during the period of the sexual revolution...

DF: Yes.

MS: And I think the Episcopal church was also starting to think about ordination of women.

DF: That's true.

MS: What are you're thoughts on the whole issue.

DF: Oh, makes perfect sense. It never seemed to me at the time that there was anything wrong with women being able to function

on her own; human nature is not confined to one gender. I mean, it's a matter of tradition, preference, that's all it is. If the majority of people are finding it helpful to include both genders than I thought it's a good idea.

MS: Alright. A last question for you then. What are your long term hopes for Carleton and the Reformed Druids?

DF: Well for Carleton I hope it continues to be the kind of place that stimulates creative, aspiring minds in a consumerist and profession driven culture. That is being what a good liberal arts college ought to be as to what unfortunately many colleges becomes. And for the Druids, well, as long as people find whatever the Druids are meaningful and valuable as a placeholder in their journey toward whatever place they find, I hope the Druids prosper and flourish too.

MS: Ok. Well I think those are the major questions I had to ask.



Figure 11 Nelson, Fisher & Frangquist, Hill of Three Oaks c.1964.

So Endeth

Part Ten and the
Main Volume of
ARDA 2

Peace, Peace, Peace.

Magazine Volume Notes

(Parts 11-14 printed as a separate 750 page Volume)

Part Eleven NRDNA Druid Magazines

2003 Preface Only

The newsletter tradition is a great legacy of the NRDNA to Reformed Druidism. Carleton Druids were networked by their alumni ties and bi-polar correspondence tradition, but the other Druids worked in a nodal format and needed something to build community, a way to share information and reach out as a recruiting tool. It details the shifting Berkeley historic politics.

Bonewits' 2 year stint editing Gnostica magazine, writing of Real Magic and Druid Chronicles (Evolved), plus his wide-ranging Neo-Pagan contacts, gave Isaac the skills to be publish the Druid Chronicler magazine. After a few years, he launched the Pentalpha organization to build a more organized Druid organization along with the Pentalpha Journal. Divorce & unemployment forced him to suspend the elaborate PJ, and the Druid Chronicler briefly returned. After Isaac left, the Live Oak Grove under Emmon Bodfish published their local "A Druid Missal-Any", which networked the scattered grove until it also faded away. Not long after Emmon's death in 1999, Stacey resumed the Missal-Any and it became the on-line voice of Reformed Druidism.

I suspect that this will be least popular section of ARDA2. because few people like to read old newspapers. Although most of the interesting articles have been lifted from those 27 years of magazines, you might still wish to watch how Druidism changes over time in a slow chronological manner, to put the articles in the context of their times. Reformatted for publication, they are a treasure to cherish and pretty much speak for themselves.

So please brush off the dust of ages past, so that your browsing might reveal insight into your future. Enjoy.

Part Twelve Conclusion

2003 Conclusion

I hope you have remembered in the beginning when I told you that nothing printed in this volume was actually very important for being a Druid. I repeat this sentiment again and again through out the book, and I'm not just doing lip service to the ideal. If you want to be a Druid you'll eventually have to stop finding excuses for not going out in the woods, fields, or even just looking out the window when you have a free moment. You'll be surprised what you discover.

I am not certain, but fate willing, I will put out another collection in 2013 for the Golden Anniversary of the RDNA. Well in advance of that time, if you feel inspired to add something to this collection, be sure to send it to me at mikerdna@hotmail.com If it is half-decent, it'll probably make it in, but in the meantime, enjoy it all. Please remember that yesterday is history, today is treasure, tomorrow is mystery; so let us treat them as such.

To be continued in ARDA /I\ : Return of the Druid

1996 Conclusion

To be continued in ARDA II,
Son of A Reformed Druid Anthology: The Druid Strikes Back

Part Thirteen: DVD of "Gatorr: The Fighting Rabbit"

2004 Introduction

The 2 hour barbarian movie, Gatorr, DVD was added to ARDA 2's Magazine Volume as an afterthought because it so captures the spirit of Carleton Druidism in 1995, although it was not strictly intended as a Druidic movie. Mark Heiman '02 and I had ample contacts with members of heavily overlapping Carleton groups like; Carleton Druids, the Folk Music Society, The Folk Dance society, Science Fiction Alliance, Society for Creative Anachronism and the Mystery Science Theatre 3000 club. Armed with only a shoestring budget of \$2000, three long summer months, piles of fake fur & beards, and 6 months of hotly debated scripts, we set out to make Carleton College's first full-length student film, and to briefly turn the amazing foliage and structures of Carleton & Olaf into the mythical wonderland that it is in my heart.

Intentionally awful as it is, Gatorr has a graceful lilt and it is emblematic of the way how Druids fully throw themselves into their projects, with every ounce of their skill, determination and free time. As the script developed, the introduction of several pseudo-religious lines and plot elements began to mature. As all films, it is a self-portrait of the inner workings of the creator. The cynical post-modernist hero is evident, perhaps giving the underlying message that society remolds the less-than-stellar reality of heroic figures to match its needs. From a sheltered, comfortable world, he undertakes new mystical challenges and is sent on a quest to right wrongs, understand himself. Gatorr's a good natured, bumbling fool pushed by circumstances much beyond his control into a leading position some pretensions towards heroism, hindered by his ineptitude. Barbarian is a relative term used by civilized people for others who are mutually not understandable and at a state of lower technological or apparent complexity.

Much of the movie is about walking, as life of even adventurers is mostly spent in travel and commonplace activities, punctuated by decisive moments. And the film shows that in excruciating details to reveal the subtler nature of heroes. Many elements of the movie (e.g. the Slainte & shoes) are purposely obscure in reason and origins, as is much of life's driving forces. There are several wizards and sages in the movie, some benevolent, others driven by deep seated grudges and fears. The element of reconciliation exists, but sadly wasn't developed fully in the movie.

By the time the final book of ARDA 2 comes out, Part Thirteen will have a copy of Gatorr's script, a map of where all the scenes took place, and details about the various actors, most of whom are Druids. If anyone would like a copy of the DVD, send \$10 to cover shipping costs to me, ask for the address at mikerdna@hotmail.com Enjoy.

Part Fourteen: ARDA Files CD

To ensure the survival of records of the Reformed Druids in case the main archives collapses, I pass on, and other inevitable developments, I am enclosing a copy of all the ARDA 1 and ARDA 2 files, collections of Druid communications, and other files to all people receiving a copy of the Magazine Volume.

Please save a copy on your computer, and share a copy to be saved on the computers of other responsible Druids. Distribute copies of the files to researchers and new Druids who have trouble locating or downloading on-line files, for whatever reason.