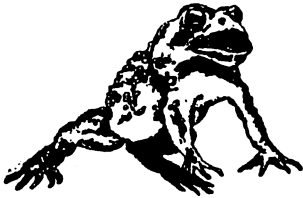

Reclaiming Newsletter



Spring 1991

#42

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Reclaiming
A Center for Feminist Spirituality
P.O. Box 14404
San Francisco, CA 94114

Newsletter Submissions: The Newsletter encourages people to submit articles, letters, or graphics related to political, pagan or spiritual issues and happenings. **Graphics are ALWAYS welcome!**

We may edit for length, spelling, punctuation and grammar; we do not alter poetry.

While we are pleased to print letters or articles on ethics, we will not print personal charges or countercharges.

All submissions, whether we print them or not, eventually find their way into our cauldron, so keep copies for yourself. Please do not ask us to return them.

Submissions are due on or before the deadline. The Newsletter staff has sworn off its lamentable co-behavior and will not chase down late submissions. We really mean it this time.

The views expressed in articles and advertisements in this Newsletter belong to the authors and advertisers . . . not to the Reclaiming Community or the Newsletter Staff. Some of us don't even like some of the stuff we print.

Summer Deadline is Wednesday, May 1, 1991



Reclaiming Events Line ☎ (415) 849-0877

This recording (listed under "Reclaiming" in Berkeley) carries announcements (and updates) of events organized by Reclaiming and others. Often, these come up too late to be put in the newsletter. Call us with events and announcements to add to the message. They can also be mailed to the Events Line at the P.O. box, but this is slower. Please allow plenty of time, and remember to say where we can reach you with questions.

—The Recording Faerie

TTY ONLY Reclaiming information and inquiries: (415) 237-6207

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Cover Design: The Return of the Earth Goddess by Holly Tannen, M.A.

This issue of the newsletter is brought to you by the following fun but dedicated persons: Anne, the Black Cat Proofreaders, Cherie, Craiggerz, Jody, Karen, Laura, Pleiades, Rose & Sharyl.



Printed on Recycled Paper

Why Pagans May Be Conscientious Objectors to War

by Starhawk

(What follows is my own attempt to formulate some common Pagan principles, and to discuss how each might be a basis for a position of conscientious objection to war. I hope this document may prove helpful to those young people of our community who are considering their own position on the draft, or applying for CO Status, and to those who may be writing letters of support. Please feel free to quote from this piece or adapt it to suit your needs, or use it in full with my name attached.)

The religious beliefs of Pagans are diverse and undogmatic. There is no central doctrinal authority to pronounce upon matters of conscience, rather, Pagans hold deep respect for the right and responsibility of each individual to make these decisions according to their own interpretations of our shared principles. For many Pagans, the underlying tenets of our religion lead us to oppose war as means of settling human conflict, and to refuse to participate in war efforts. The Grand Council of the Covenant of the Goddess, a legal church and one of the most widely respected Pagan organizations, voted in 1985 to affirm the right of members to decide, as a matter of faith, that they are conscientiously opposed to war.

Pagan traditions are rooted in the concept of an immanent deity. Our Goddess, our Gods, are not separate from the material world, but are embodied, in nature, in human beings, in culture. Every human being is another facet of the Goddess, another way in which She reveals some aspect of Herself, some possibility of transformation.

Therefore, to kill a human being is to commit deicide as well as murder. Each individual's unique consciousness, potential, and life experience is sacred, not to be manipulated or coerced in any way. Death is an inherent part of life, not something to be feared or denied, but to take someone else's life before their time is a denial

of the sacred life force. To demonize the enemy, to characterize a whole national or racial group as fair game for killing, is to deny the Goddess in them.

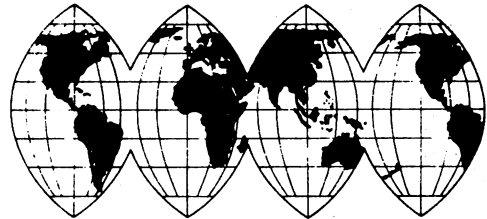
In our own history, our religious traditions have too often been the victim of such demonization. We know too well how it feels to be made the enemy, to be suppressed and to have our culture and traditions denigrated and misunderstood. We are therefore inherently suspicious of all attempts to justify war by portraying an enemy as evil, intractable, irrational, mad. Our faith demands that we continue to search for the spark of humanity in even the most malevolent opponent.

To Pagans, all of life is interconnected. Human life is interdependent with plant and animal communities, with elemental and energy resources. War ruptures those connections. If we do not see ourselves as separate from the enemy, we cannot kill the enemy. We know that what happens to other human beings affects us, directly and subtly. The suffering of others is also our suffering, and therefore we cannot contribute to suffering.

The earth, in our tradition, is also sacred. We see the earth as a living being, a conscious organism of which we are all parts. All modern war is also war on the earth. We have already seen tremendous environmental devastation in the Gulf, from the bombing, from oil spills and fires. To a Pagan, dropping a bomb that explodes on 'uninhabited' desert and kills no human being is still participating in an act of murder—murder of the animal and plant life and the fragile desert ecology, wounding of the living body of our living Goddess. Our religion demands that we work to preserve the integrity of biological systems, that we safeguard the air and the water. Therefore we cannot participate in warfare which poses such extreme dangers to the ecosystems of the earth.

Pagan religions teach personal responsibility and accountability to a community. We are each responsible for the consequences of our acts. But in modern warfare, it is impossible to know what the results of our acts may be. A pilot pushes a button, sees a blip on a screen, but never knows where the bombs fall, and how many he or she has killed. War demands obedience to authority that supercedes the individual conscience, but our religion demands that we remain true to our individual sense of integrity. Therefore a Pagan could not, in good conscience, carry out orders that contradicted her or his sense of justice.

Finally, the Pagan tradition teaches us that the ends do not justify the means. Rather, the means we choose, themselves determine the ends we can achieve. Violent means leave a legacy of violence. We cannot achieve peace through war. Instead, we are called to use our vision and imagination, qualities highly valued in our tradition, to make our every action reflect the qualities we wish to see manifest in society, to ourselves live out the world we wish to create. If we desire a world free of domination, coercion and violence, we must seek other means to resolve conflicts, and ourselves strive to live non-violently in both the personal and political realms.



Peace Poem/January 15 1991

*when rotting heaps of sexual organs and vital organs and squished bones
lay strewn in petrified screams of agony,
oxygen absconds from an atmosphere of fuming gallons of wasted blood,
and shocked vomit heaves out wrenching Earth,
will Our Boundless Being gasp or sob in Her Sleep?
Will She shed this layer of dream called human species
like chafed snakeskin left to dry away in an undiscovered sun?
Or will She wait with inexorable patience for
even this rabid piece of Her Hope to heal and grow?
Were we to merely be aware of Her,
might not the whole impending horror become instead
Dawn of Fresh Choice opening Our Bud of Flowering Wisdom*

Paul Meyers





The Final Solution to the Timber Problem



by Holly Tannen, *Mistress of Folklore*

With the failure of all the timber initiatives on the November ballot, we here in Mendonesia have been thrown back upon our own resources. Can we create a timber harvesting policy that saves jobs, gives us the wood pulp we need for the ton of direct mail we throw into trash bins each week, and yet does not tweak the delicate sensitivities of well-fed middle-class environmentalists?

The Brain Trust here at the College of the Pygmies has been addressing this issue every evening in what we call our "Think Tank": the redw . . .—I mean, recycled styrofoam—hot tub out behind the Menstrual Hut.

On September 12th and 13th 1990, loggers in the pay of Louisiana Pacific cut down fifty of the sixty old-growth redwood trees in Osprey Grove off of Navarro Ridge, despite an offer to buy the woods at fair-market value by the Save the Redwoods League. The last trees were felled even after orders to stop were received from LP executives. Later in the week LP spokesman Shep Tucker wrote a letter to the Friends of Osprey Grove apologizing for the "mistake."

"If I were a six hundred-year-old redwood tree cut down in the prime of my life," mused Archdruid Seamus O'Blivious, "how meaningful would an apology from someone named Shep Tucker be to me?" Gladys Stagnant Water pointed out that among Native American tribes it was traditionally considered good manners to apologize to an animal or plant before you took its life.

"That's it!" crowed Poison Oakwomyn. "Here's what we do. We get Georgia and Louisiana Pacific to hire Native American healers to apologize to the trees!"

Having lived on this land for thousands of years, she said, the shamans can speak to the trees in their own language, and explain that their deaths are necessary for the continuation of civilization as we know it. Trees that have behaved themselves in this lifetime will get cushy

jobs in the Afterlife: perhaps as planks in Harry Merlo's hot tub, where they can watch naked business executives and their young male and female companions disporting themselves. Uppity redwoods—ones that have allowed ecoterrorists to chain themselves to them, or that have fallen on loggers "by mistake"—may end up as chips in someone's backyard in Milpitas.

Aurora Borealis Medicine Turkey pointed out that this is the only solution so far proposed that actually creates jobs for minority group members. The minimum wage that LP would pay the apologists is more than they would get anywhere else. Native shamans are familiar with all the local healing herbs, so the lack of health benefits or insurance would be no problem for them. And since environmentalists all believe in reincarnation, they can have no logical objections to the proposal.

At this point in the discussion, the head of the Department of Traumatic Arts, Robert Redwoodthorpe, burst into song. This is the song into which he burst.

O' Shep

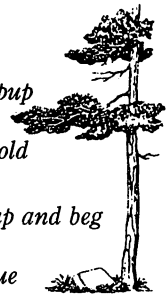
(Words and music traditional)

*When I was a lad and O' Shep was a pup
Through ancient forests we'd stray
Until with their promise of silver and gold
The mill owners lured him away.*

*Now Shep's learned to heel, and to sit up and beg
And do anything his masters wish
O' Shep he is loyal and faithful and true
To whoever brings his supper dish.*

*Sometimes they abuse him, and turn him outdoors
With many a curse and a kick
But he whines and he cries and he softens their hearts
O' Shep always knows where to lick.*

*When I was a lad and O' Shep was a pup
Through ancient redwoods we'd stray
And the same thing O' Shep used to do to my leg
He's done to the forest today.*



La Vie Est Belle

*Summer sun in November
In the long vase, the blossoms turn
Toward the lit window
My son comes from afar
African music insists he dance
Guests come and go, eating my huge breakfast
Drinking my coffee, heaping fresh baked things
On the cornucopia of a table
It is well with me
When Melinda brings the French child
He is delighted with everything
And teaches me to say non and oui
And allons-y
Oh-oh, la vie est belle*

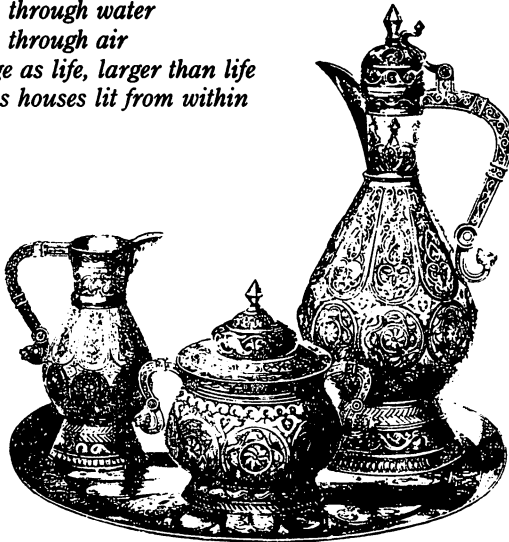
*All through the city the studios are open
Art opens its many arms
Calls home all of us
Who imagine living an art
At Dana's studio
Glass, glass and more glass
Glass boxes with glass things
Angels, mirrors, shapes
Glass boxes that hold the world
Feathers, stones, sand and bone, Driftwood,
shapes in metal, stars,
Seen through water
Seen through air
Large as life, larger than life
Glass houses lit from within*

*Dana feeds us
We walk around her boxes and altars
In the big room with the hardwood floors
She names some of the things
"Different levels"
"Stones not thrown"
"Encyclopaedia of no knowledge"
"Fine without a purpose"
"Transmission"—a hand reaching up
Out of red soft dust
To a glass shell spiral above
She apologizes about the prices*

*Later, another room
Babies, food like an enormous offering,
A coiling serpent of conversation
Fine without a purpose
Our houses are glass we let our friends look in
We say, these are our secrets
We admit not knowing
And we hint at transmissions from above
We have built boxes with the world inside
Curious, magical, stronger than they look*

*Art feeds us
We feed each other
As Dana Says,
"If it isn't magic
It's just merchandise."*

steven mentor
20th street/valencia street/28th street
san francisco
11 november 1990



Hannah's Household Hints

OK, that's it, it's all over. There was a last minute effort by Hannah's tardy supporters to swing the election, but Too Late, Too Little. Final tally: Pandora, 35; Hannah, 10; Maybe, Confused, or Hopelessly Garbled, 22. I win.

Actually, now that I've had a rest from Hannah for a few months, I find myself missing her . . . some of it wasn't so bad . . . some nice evenings at the Anarchist Coffee House; good times in jail; some really fine birthday parties . . . I might let her back in sometimes . . . maybe I was too hasty . . .

On the other hand, I have received many odd letters that worry me considerably (see Hopelessly Garbled, above), and leave me convinced that we *all* need a break from Hannah. Most worrisome are the several readers who have written to suggest that the problem between Hannah and myself can best be resolved by sexual means. That is, if we would only get it on everything would be just fine.

I'll rot in hell first, believe me.

This is a matter of taste, not prudery. I've got nothing against the occasional succubus, but Hannah is rather lacking in subtlety.

My beloved student from Hamburg, Saabine, is worried that too many of us are trying to clean our houses with magic instead of our hands (that may really be the problem with American housecleaning, now that I think of it—you're right, Saabine, we should get real), and she is also concerned that I am being attacked and bothered by unknown entities and readers. It's ok, really, Saabine. The readers don't know my address, and the entities are all over in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, providing a non-violent peaceful spiritual presence on the front lines.

At any rate, Hannah is quite happy now, I'd like you all to know. Now that the Heavenly Blockade has been eclipsed by Events in the Middle East (most of the participants are over there even as we speak, having joined forces



with the same angelic forces they were protesting earlier), Hannah has been vacationing in Ireland, where she is doing advanced course work in Modern Irish in order to read the newspapers, due to her conviction that if it's written in English it can't possibly be true.

On to real business. Margot Cryptic Word writes to ask what she should do with the dregs of spells, which are traditionally put into running water, now that the drought is in its fifth year. Well, Margot, I used to suggest that all spell dregs be put into biodegradable plastic bags and consigned to the holy sacred trash can without looking back, but now I have a new idea, which is to put them all directly into swimming pools. This is a method of political action which I call Direct Landfill, nicely combining the spiritual and the political. Affinity groups forming soon. Be the first to sign up on your block. I suggest using the dregs of spells focussed on peace—this gets two jobs done at once. We'll need a lot, though, so get busy.

A final note—it turns out that the tree ring experts have discovered that California gets a 10 to 20 year drought every oh, 100 years or so, and the last was in, oh, about 1880. This does *not* mean we get to use hairspray again—I've personally been boycotting hairspray since I was 5, and proud of it, too—but it *does* mean that we no longer need to feel guilty if we happen to enjoy the nice sunny days. Just get those spell dregs ready.

It may make you feel better to know that it's been raining overmuch in New Mexico, so the desert is greener than it ought to be. My brother says this is part of the Goddess's natural joke cycle, and if we move to New Mexico to escape the drought we'll be sorry later. We must keep these things in perspective. And we should learn to eat more cacti.

So farewell, keep the faith, and blessed be. Do not vote anymore.

Love, Pandora

Rose Rants

Rose May Dance



It feels really odd—off—to have been so busy with political actions and political magic, and to not want to write about it. Since early January I have participated in some good magic for peace, posterized countless BART trains, spent two weeks marching almost every day, blocked a freeway, been arrested, and escaped several arrests, responding to the crisis in the Persian Gulf. But these activities do not feel like adventures, nor deeply spiritual experiences, nor anything worth telling. I am disheartened, in despair about this war and the state of this earth, not to mention the fact that the place where I live is drying up from five years of drought.

I know it is important for us to know about and be inspired by each others' actions and magic, especially in the face of the information control in this country. But the fact that there are protests in San Francisco has been reported to the rest of America. We are marginalized—kooks, nuts, and queers. Everyone expects us to protest everything. So I really don't have to tell you what we're doing. Please let us hear what's going on elsewhere, and tell us how you keep your spirits up, if you do.

It was really wonderful to work on the national cone of power for Mesopotamia the Sunday before the war started. But within three days the bombs were falling. It is a big challenge to my faith right now to think of us as anything but Ghost Dancers.

While I'm in a bad mood, let me tell you two pet peeves that came up for me at our Brigid ritual this year.

1) Despite that we said "rain or shine" on the Events Line, our house received about 50 telephone calls on the morning and afternoon before the ritual from people asking whether the weather would stop the ritual. We were bustling around like crazy trying to gather all the things we needed to take to the ritual, and the phone calling made it difficult.

2) Cauldron jumping: in *my* opinion, and nobody asked me, we jump the cauldron in pairs and groups at Beltane to purify our relationships. At other times of the year, we jump alone. There is great power in a cleansing jump over the cauldron, alone, and I dislike the trend I see of couples and triples and families and households and covens galloping toward any old cauldron fire available.

Ok, ok, I'm a grouch, I need a meeting, I need attention. Let me tell you how lovely Brigid was. Starhawk and Carol and others have always held that we need to go outside and dance in the rain to hail the change of seasons. It was so wonderful to actually hold a big ritual in the rain. We were in a green meadow on the back side of Red Rock, and the rain was gentle for the most part, although at the beginning, during the grounding, it was coming down pretty hard, and we lost some people. We had to let go of large chunks of our plans, and the candles wouldn't light. But most folks stayed to dance and drum and sing in the rain, pray for more rain, and for peace. We didn't hurry, and we didn't mind.

Journal entry 2-1-91. I was just up at the Cole Street cheese store. The sandwich maker there is a middle-aged Arab, a real joker and charmer. When I came in he was laughing with another worker, saying that George Bush had just hired the CIA to spy on him. Another customer, also an Arab man of middle age, came in; he was someone known to the sandwich maker, who asked this customer how he was. The customer shook his head, and said he was bad. The sandwich maker said he would cheer him up in a minute. The customer said, "You can't—nothing will help."

The sandwich maker said "I just got a phone call from Bush, they are just going to concentrate on Baghdad, destroying Baghdad. Kuwait can stay with Iraq."

The customer just shook his head. I was making upset noises and nods.

The sandwich maker asked the customer, "Whatza matter, you been listening to the news?"

Customer said "Yes."

Sandwich maker said, "Oh, you've got to make war, it's part of life!" trying to be jovial.

I bridled and said, "I don't think so, I'm a pacifist and . . ."

The Arab customer said, "Me too, I'm a pacifist too." We turned and faced each other. He said, "I don't think there's anything that can be solved or made better by war."

"No" I said. I said, "It's very confusing."

He said, "I am also confused."

I said, "And what about my prayers, where are they going?"

He held up his finger and said, full of heart, "You wait. You'll see. Your prayers will be answered."

I smiled, on my way out the door, and said I hoped so. "Bless you" I said.

"Yes" he added, distractedly, "same to you."

I walked out of the store, tears coming to my eyes, face trembling. I started down the street. On the front steps in front of a house a few doors down Cole Street sat the old man with the radio, whom Star writes about in *Dreaming the Dark*. Today he did not have his radio, but had an elaborate dangling earring—something new. I composed my face to try to greet him. He was looking at me.

"Hello" I nodded.

"God bless you" he said. He's never said that before. But he's not seen me cry before. Goddess help us.

the night walkers

*faint footholds define an ominous passage
across this dying bridge toward a birth unforeseen
a way opens only with each step into shadow
through deadening echoes of once urgent screams*

*unwavering night falls forever around you
on this changeling way to an unrevealed dawn
only in stride is the crossing created
over chasms of chaos this tightrope is drawn*

*no map can be drawn of these shifting dimensions
from this dark cauldron flows no destination of soul
no promise unbroken by pain unremembered
just a door into night for those who must go*

*there is no deliverance in mirrored white towers
rising up from the swamp where the armored lie drowned
only perilous truth swirling naked around you
from the force of this wind no refuge is found*

*for children born into the heart of this nightmare
new dreamers awake to this dark inward sight
for you who must breathe in the cold flames of terror
only this phantom bridge may again span the night*



roy king

Substitute Teaching for Social Change: Jail Solidarity in the Classroom

by Anne Hill

In college, they teach you how educators can change the system from within by making classes more democratic and lessons more interesting. My experience being a sub for close to five years, however, has belied these teachings and taught me a thing or two about education in the process.

These kids don't need to see another grown-up trying to be their friend and bribing them with pencils for good behavior. They need to see what they're up against: an educational system based on principles of incarceration, where power is hierarchical and information strictly controlled.

When I teach (and here I am referring mostly to middle school, grades 5-8), I challenge all my students to realize they are powerless until they organize as a group and fight for their demands. Otherwise, why am I being paid \$60 a day? To babysit? I am committed to keeping jail solidarity instruction in the middle school curriculum, and here's how:

Phase I—Goal: to realize strength in numbers; to initiate a process for group communication and decision-making.

Example:

"Miss Hill, I have to go right now because I forgot my mom is waiting for me at the office, I have a dentist appointment and I never got a note for it, I forgot and I'm late!"

"Nice try, Kristy. You can leave when the bell rings." Kristy gives me a look of defeat mixed with hatred, and turns to head back to her desk. Her classmates snicker at something she mutters under her breath, then pretend to study as the first notes begin to circulate around the classroom.



Kristy quickly realized that on her own she could not hope to leave class early and, because of her initiative in sending notes around the class, this particular group of 7th graders is well on their way toward completion of Phase I. The real test will be whether consensus on a plan is achieved before the bell rings, and whether they can maintain classroom solidarity through the whole action.

I am also particularly proud of Kristy, because in her futile attempt to cite out early, she intuitively bit on a much more advanced goal of classroom solidarity, one that 7th graders rarely attempt: to demand attention to particular needs of some individuals, such as for medical treatment.

Phase II—Goal: to explore basic solidarity tactics, such as not giving names and demanding equal treatment for repeat offenders.

Example (in another class):

"Excuse me, what's your name?" I ask as I approach an instigator in a group of 7th grade girls.

"Uh, . . . Nicole." Snickering from the class.

"Fine, Nicole. You've just earned a detention." More snickering, and one or two voices of protest that are quickly stifled by neighbors.

Silence in the class as I turn and write Nicole's name on the board. Finally, the class fink speaks up: "No really, that's Kathleen, except she's supposed to sit over there."

"Really? Thanks very much." I write Kathleen's name on the board, too.

"Wait a second! They've been fooling you," one of Nicole/Kathleen's pals says. "She's Robin, and I'm Cynthia. Kathleen is absent."

“Ok.” I write all the mentioned names on the board to howls of protest from the class. This is precisely the reaction I am looking for, and as I return to the teacher’s desk, I wipe the chalk dust from my fingers with satisfaction, awaiting their next move.

Some middle school teachers will leave substitutes a seating chart, but the best know not to. Withholding names and other identification is an important lesson for students to learn, and can be impossible if the sub has too much information. I’ve known teachers so advanced that they do not even leave lesson plans. This is usually done to demonstrate to students the power of censorship working in the classroom.

The class in question here already had several affinity groups working toward their own ends in the classroom. Now that some have been singled out for special treatment, they will have to achieve some consensus on acceptable tactics. They will succeed only if they adequately address the needs of the class fink, an exceptionally difficult task for 7th graders.

Phase III—Goal: to achieve heretofore undreamed of levels of individual empowerment; to build group trust by staging a successful general strike in support of unmet demands.

Example (in yet a third classroom):

“But Mr. Robinson *always* lets us have open-book tests!”

“Sorry, you guys. This is a *closed-book* test. Jerry, if you don’t put your book away right NOW, you’re out of here.”

“If I can’t use my book, I’m not taking the test!”

“Me, either!”

“Me, either!”

“Don’t take the test! Don’t take the test! Don’t take the test!”

As I look around me at 28 chanting 5th graders, faces flush with victory, I know my work here is complete. In just a few days as their substitute teacher, I have seen them progress from isolated incidents of resistance to a full-scale, desk-banging strike. Quickly, I excuse them all

for P.E., inform the secretary that I’m leaving and head for the parking lot.

This exceptional group of 5th graders had worked very hard to achieve what had by then become a county-wide reputation for excellence in classroom solidarity. I, of course, can accept very little credit for this accomplishment, since in this case all necessary elements were in place well before my arrival: a faculty and staff united in their efforts to encourage these students through Phases I and II, positive familial role models, and that mysterious chemistry that can occur among like-minded activists, making all the work seem like fun.

Substitute teaching for social change is by no means easy, and is probably not for everyone. There has been a lot of pressure recently for school districts to adopt such things as self-esteem and conflict-resolution programs into the core curriculum. This movement may seriously undermine efforts to radicalize our youth, and must be resisted in the faculty lunch room, and ignored in the classroom.

It is time for us to accept public education for what it is, and make use of it. Only by working together can we as education’s temp workers insure that the jail solidarity information for which we have worked so hard will be handed down to the next generation.



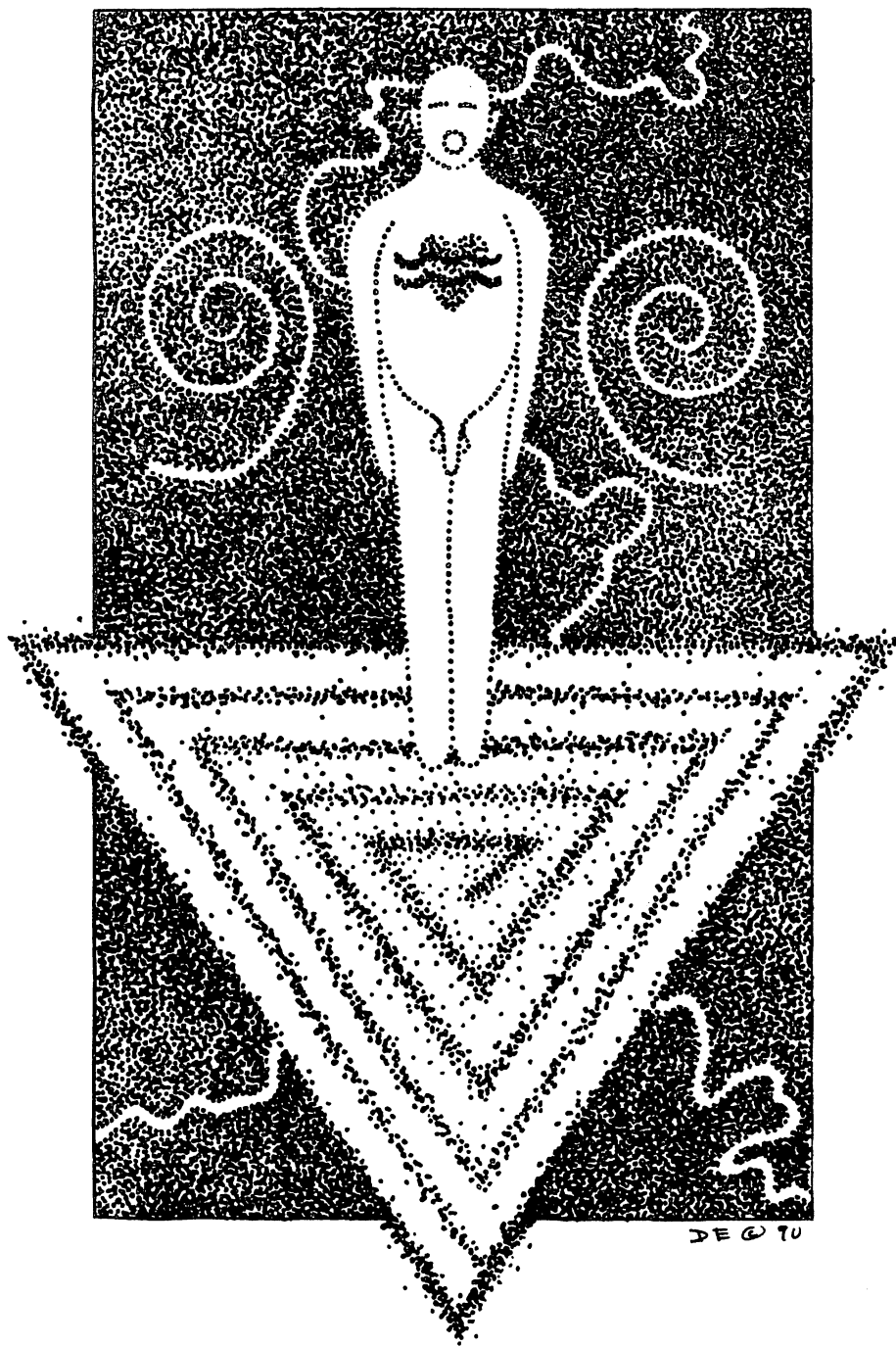
grandma's rain

*my grandmother was
a cat
she was also a first
native american
she was a goddess
sometimes i saw
the whiskers
other times i saw
the feathers
always the wisdom
shooting out of her
hair
her beautiful
salt & pepper hair
her purr
radiated
women's spirituality
and granddaughter dreams
& radiant atlantis shoulders
where i sat
upon her
great spirit heights
looking around
learning
knowing
this incarnation being
a time to thrust memory
at my distrust for the
story of his plan
his soul's pathetic performance
within human skin
the goddesses
gather
amongst themselves
& no whispers
will do now
there is an understanding
an unwritten energy
that we gather into &
beside ourselves
always to see & touch & think
to know
be aware
awareness is the thing*



*after she died
grandma astral
projected with me
& as I brushed her
& combed through her
floor-length sensual stuff
she told me
much of what
i needed to know to reach
spiritual heights
sensed together only by
the human female
we must build
the foundation
the columns
decide on where & when
& who will come with us
the indian was
no princess
no queen
she is the goddess
forever brushing &
combing & breathing &
speaking
in my ear
that lemurian memory
pointing to the sea
where the goddesses
convene their intellectual
congress
under watercolor waterfalls
& sunrises & sunsets
pastel pinks & blues &
reds & purples
to remind me
always memory
that i am the rainbow
to remember
remember
remember . . .*

Jackie Freitas



And He Shall Sing a Queer Song ©1990 Donald L. Engstrom

Miss Ella Young

The Feast of Bealtaine Practice

Padraigin McGillicuddy

Miss Ella Young (1867–1957) was an Irish mystic who spent her final years here in Northern California. Her ashes are scattered in a Redwood Grove near Calistoga, and members of the Fellowship of Shasta, which she founded, still meet in the grove on the four great annual Celtic Feasts. In California she had what amounted to a cult following for the message she brought from an earlier pagan age—a sense of communion with all things, the ability to communicate with Nature Spirits, and a passionate reverence for the living earth. She wrote four books of Celtic mythology, three books of poetry and numerous stories for children. Possessed of a luminous beauty, she was sketched and photographed by the leading artists of the time including Ansel Adams and Edward Weston.

The Fellowship of Shasta, named after the great mountain Ella so loved, continued the rituals of the Fellowship of the Four Jewels which she started in Ireland. Ella had spent many years in the West of Ireland, learning the Gaelic Irish language and the old wisdom. When a young woman, she undertook numerous wilderness Vision Quests in the mountains outside Dublin. She wrote of her experiences and her knowledge describing in great detail the music of the earth, *Ceol Sidhe*, as she called it, the music of the faerie.

The old Irish, she said, believed that the misshapen world of chaos is redeemed and made beautiful by the indwelling of the gods. They regarded creation as progressive, carried on by different incursions or waves of divinity. According to old legends, it was on the first of May that the De Danaans came to Ireland. They came out of the sky, or across the sea, and brought with

them the four great jewels: the Sword of Light, the Spear of Victory, the Stone of Destiny and the Cauldron of Plenty.

These they brought to help them in their struggle with the powers of chaos, for they came to shape the world. They shaped it by taking its nature upon themselves. And the earth, because of them, took on a new beauty, and rivers and lakes sprang into being. Each of the De Danaans is in a sense a transmuter, a creator of divine order.

The Feast of Bealtaine (which is simply the Irish for May) then is the coming-forth of the heroes and a bursting forth of new life on earth. The feast begins on the 29th of April, culminates on the 1st of May and ends on May 3rd. Ella developed the following practice, to be done alone or in group.

FIRST DAY (The Spear of Victory)

Aspiration: May the glory of the divine life manifest itself in my life this day. May I behold that glory in all things. May I heal and be healed by it. May I enlighten and be enlightened by it. May I conquer and be conquered by it.

Endeavour during the whole day to preserve a continual spiritual consciousness of the divine energy as the Life Force sustaining yourself and all things that exist.

SECOND DAY (The Sword of Light)

Aspiration: May the sword of divine Beauty slay ugliness in me. May the divine Truth liberate me. O Sword of Light, defend me!

Endeavour to realise the divine power as invincible and going forth continually. Will that it may achieve a victory this day in yourself, that it may cleanse and transmute and fortify you in body, soul and estate.

THIRD DAY (The Runes of the Jewels—to be recited as many times as possible during the day.)

Rune of the Stone: We establish ourselves by love, the ancient wisdom. We are the rays of the Stone.

Rune of the Spear: We send out the heart-ray to our comrades, the fiery invincible spear.

Rune of the Sword: By Beauty we conquer the world, Beauty the sword.

Rune of the Cup: Almighty Spirit we live by thee. Show forth thy glory in us who are body, soul and spirit Thy Cup.

FOURTH DAY (The Cauldron of Plenty)

Aspiration: May I draw near this day to the Divine compassion. May I be healed by it, and gladdened and made wise.

Endeavour. This day approach all things through love. Put away as much as possible whatever might hurt the heart of another. Be willing to honor in others the virtues further from your own.

FIFTH DAY (The Stone of Destiny)

Aspiration: May I this day build into my life Truth, Beauty, Steadfastness and loving-kindness.

Endeavour to realize yourself a part of a divine order, as working in unison with mighty forces, as holding inviolate an impress of the divine perfection, and as being in this respect unconquerable.

[KPFA producer Padraigin McGillicuddy is writing a biography of Ella Young and this July is leading a tour to the Sacred Sites of Ancient Ireland. See ads.]



FORUM

On November 10, 1990 Reclaiming Collective presented a symposium entitled "California Traditions: 20 Years of Craft in California." The symposium consisted of a slide presentation of Craft and Pagan activities in Southern California by Jo Carson, a video entitled "Between the Worlds" by Greg Harder, and a Jo Carson film called "A Dance for the Goddess," which depicted a series of rituals by a group called

Feraferia which flourished in Southern California in the 70's. In addition, there was a panel of nine diverse local Witches who commented on the films and fielded questions from the audience. The following letter is a response from one of the attendees. Reclaiming welcomes additional feedback on the symposium, as well as suggestions for similar future events.

~~~~~

November 13, 1990

Dear Macha NightMare,

I am writing this letter in response to the panel discussion I attended on November 10th.

I appreciate your efforts to create an informative networking meeting about Goddess groups, Pagans and Witches. I'm sure you worked very hard on this, and you did your best.

At the beginning of the meeting I felt an open-hearted, supportive energy permeating the room. Later on I noticed and experienced a drastic change in energy, and a confused, critical, negative energy surfaced and spread throughout the meeting area. My partner, Andre, agrees.

After the young agitated woman in the audience ridiculed Fred Adams's work, (which I felt was an elegant, beautiful and spiritual portrayal of Goddess in a pure and healthy human form), it seemed that your previous positive energy towards Feraferia changed. It seemed that way with some panel members also, especially the man who made the disrespectful remarks about the art. You seemed to agree with these people that Fred's work was sexist and that the art was disturbing to you. You made some comments about the early Pagans in the 60's-70's being sexist and that it was changing. You also stated that

Feraferians are not Witches. I was confused about the reason for having the film shown and advertised in the flyer, and appearing to feel a positive energy about it and then changing the views when the film was challenged.

The panelist who said the women portrayed were anorexic, seemed to be reacting from personal issues rather than truth[?]. As a weight training instructor and mental health therapist, I have worked with anorexics and body builders. The bodies of the women in the art were not unlike the bodies of very healthy—and pure of diet—competition body builders. The women in the art had beautifully defined muscles, clear, penetrating eyes and healthy hair. Anorexics do not have these characteristics.

Personally, I feel pristine health in spirituality is very important! Especially when one is working with Kundalini energy. A strong, healthy body can handle the powerful serpent current much better than one that is not in pristine health. Research has shown that unhealthy bodies experiencing Kundalini can have traumatic and serious physical and psychological problems, that can last for years in some cases.

One reason for a strong focus on the Goddess and the Maiden is that since the First Kurgan Wave in 4300-4200 BCE (when Goddess cultures were overthrown and destroyed by the

warrior patriarchal cultures), the Earth and all Her creatures and plant life have experienced great suffering, insanity and destruction. I feel that the way to bring balance and healing to the Earth is to call on the Goddess of healing and mercy, (who is Kore) to instill in our hearts once again a wisdom and passion for living in truth, mercy, and peace. In the Maiden lies all the glorious gifts of the God and the Goddess. The Maiden represents healing, truth, mercy, creativity (and music, dance, art) inner wisdom & knowledge, passion, strength, power and love. She represents a non-authoritarian way of life and being—which I feel is the essence of the Golden Age to come.

Fred Adams considers the female body to be a glorious, creative, beautiful and powerfully sacred vessel of Goddess energy. I feel his work is definitely not sexist, exploitative or abusive to anyone. To me, the women in his paintings, representing the "Naked Truth" of the Goddess, were the most respectful, powerful and beautiful Goddess representations I have ever seen.

Thank you for reading this letter and for hearing a response from a member of the audience, who may differ from some of the panel's views.

I hope we can see a future where all Goddess people can support, respect, and understand each other, even though our specific paths and practices/rituals/beliefs may differ in some aspects.

Maybe some open-circle discussions, beginning with a focused-eclectic grounding ritual would be good for networking, and making way for an open-hearted, peaceful Goddess Era (to bring in the Golden Age).

Please give this letter to any panel members you may come in contact with. I'd like to share it, but have no addresses for them.

Blessed Be,

Starfire Heartsong

*(Note: An 83-minute extended version of "Between the Worlds" is available for \$25 prepaid from Freya's Folk, 537 Jones St., San Francisco, CA 94102.)*

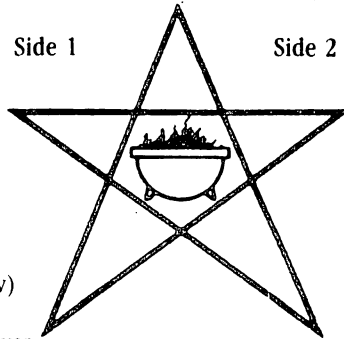
### Chants ★ Ritual Music

*a cassette tape from the Reclaiming community*

A 40-minute tape of chants and songs from various sources which are frequently used in Reclaiming rituals. The tape is intended as a teaching tool and a worksheet is included. We hope that you will sing these chants and songs, use them in ritual, and teach them to others. Proceeds from the sale of this tape help support the work of the Reclaiming Collective. **To order:** Send check or money order in U.S. currency to **Reclaiming Tape, P.O. Box 14404, San Francisco, CA 94114.** Price: \$1000 each, includes postage (add \$300 for each overseas mailing).

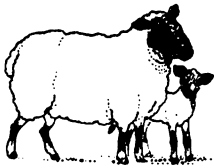
Side 1

The Beginning of the Earth  
 Touching Her Deep  
 Air I Am  
 Rise with the Fire  
 Snake Woman  
 Isis Astarte  
 We are an Old People  
 I Am a Strong Woman  
 We Are The Flow (orig. melody)  
 Silver Shining Wheel  
 Where There's Fear There Is Power  
 Hecate Ceredwen



Side 2

Return to the Mother  
 Born of Water  
 Air Moves Us  
 Water and Stone  
 We All Come From The Goddess/  
 Hoof and Horn  
 Kore Chant  
 We Are The Flow  
 Sun King  
 We Are Alive



# Reclaiming



# la

## **ELEMENTS OF MAGIC FOR WOMEN AND MEN by Rose May Dance and Hillary, with Margaret as student teacher**

With the art of magic, we deepen our vision and focus our will, empowering ourselves to act in the world. In this class we begin the practice of Magic, Witchcraft, and Goddess spirituality by working with the Elements of Magic: Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Spirit. Techniques include: visualization, sensing and projecting energy, chanting, trance, creating magical space, spellcraft, and structuring rituals. Group experience follows feminist consensus process. We hope to provide a fair and nurturing environment for all participants. Beginning six-week course. Prerequisite: Reading of the first six chapters of *The Spiral Dance* by Starhawk. We ask that all applicants be committed to attending all six classes, which will be held on **Thursday evenings, starting April 11, 1991** in the San Francisco Mission District. Call Rose at 821-3336 for information, registration, and location. Sliding scale \$60-120.

## **ELEMENTS OF MAGIC FOR WOMEN (East Bay) by Vibra and Cybele.**

With the art of magic, we deepen our vision and focus our will, empowering ourselves to act in the world. In this class we begin the practice of Magic, Witchcraft, and Goddess spirituality by working with the Elements of Magic: Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Spirit. Techniques include: visualization, sensing and projecting energy, chanting, trance, creating magical space, spellcraft, and structuring rituals. Beginning six-week course, six **Tuesday evenings, starting May 7, 1991** We ask that all applicants be committed to attending all six classes. Sliding scale \$60-120. Call Vibra at 237-6207 voice/TTY for information, registration, and location.

## **ELEMENTS OF MAGIC FOR TEENAGERS (East Bay) by Vibra and Amy.**

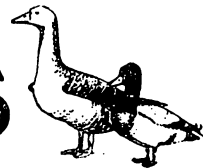
With the art of magic, we deepen our vision and focus our will, empowering ourselves to act in the world. In this class we begin the practice of Magic, Witchcraft, and Goddess spirituality by working with the Elements of Magic: Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Spirit. Techniques include: visualization, sensing and projecting energy, chanting, trance, creating magical space, spellcraft, and structuring rituals. Beginning course, three **Saturdays: April 20, April 27, and May 4, 1991** We ask that applicants be committed to attending all classes. Sliding scale \$20-120. Terms. Call Vibra at 237-6207 voice/TTY for information, registration, and location.

## **LOOKING AT YOUR ASTROLOGICAL BIRTH CHART by Judy Foster**

Do you have a chart but no clue how to read it? In this class, I will show you how to structure your own interpretation for continuous self-exploration. After all, who knows you as well as yourself? Prerequisites: some familiarity with the Western esoteric symbolic system, and your birth chart (or a computer print-out of the data). Four **Monday evenings in the East Bay. April 15, 22, 29, May 6-7-9:30 pm.** \$30-\$60 sliding scale. For details call 843-0722.



# Classes and **E**vents



## **WITCH CAMP '91**

Reclaiming teachers will offer summer intensives again in both British Columbia and Michigan. Come spend a week immersed in magic, ritual, and pagan community.

### **VANCOUVER WITCH CAMP: Near Vancouver, BC, Canada, July 22 through July 28.**

Teachers will include Starhawk, 2 other San Francisco teachers, and 3 local teachers, and student teachers -details available soon. There will be three tracks: Elements of Magic for beginners, The Pentacle of Iron (Sex, Self, Passion, Pride and Power) for more advanced students, and the Teachers Track for very advanced students who have attended another Witch Camp and who wish to teach in their own communities. Contact: Pat Hogan and Marion Lay, P.O. Box 66155, Station F, Vancouver, Canada V5N 5L4, (604)224-7062 (Marion) or (604)253-7189 (Pat).

### **MIDWEST WITCH CAMP: South Central Michigan, August 24-30.**

Teachers will include Starhawk, 3 other teachers from San Francisco, and some student teachers. Contact Adrienne, below, for definite information about who will teach. There will be three tracks: Elements of Magic for beginners, The Self Track (working with material from Starhawk's book *Truth or Dare*) for more advanced students, and the Teachers Track for very advanced students who have attended another Witch Camp and who wish to teach in their own communities. Contact: Adrienne Young, Wiccan Summer Intensive, P.O. Box 26, Clarendon Hills, IL 60514. (708)887-4747.

Both intensives are open to women and men. Fees are based on a sliding scale and will range from under \$300 U.S. to \$415, depending on location. Some scholarships are available.

**TEACHERS TRACK STUDENTS:** *After you have secured admission to one of the camps, apply in writing to the teachers track, explaining why you want to be in the track, and what your qualifications may be—what work have you done in groups, your Wiccan studies and activities, your political activities, etc. Write Teachers Track Reclaiming, PO Box 14404, San Francisco, 94114.*



# Starhawk's Spring 1991 Schedule

*For more information, schedule updates and Summer Events, contact  
HARMONY NETWORK, P.O. Box 2550, Guerneville, CA 95446 (707) 869-0989*

**March 19-27, 1991: Starhawk and Luisah Teish in Hawaii**

2nd Annual Spring Equinox Retreat for Women

Contact: Harmony Network (707) 869-0989

**April 5-6, 1991: Indianapolis, Indiana**

Association of Humanistic Psychology Conference

Contact: Mickey Randolph (317) 923-4490

**April 11, 1991: Evergreen, Colorado**

Evening Talk and Ritual

Contact: Bonnie (303) 674-5382 or Nona Gandelman (303) 440-7005

**April 12-14, 1991: Colorado Springs, Colorado**

Weekend Workshops with Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Contact: Cathy Kleinsmith (719) 574-9674

**April 21, 1991: EARTH DAY—San Francisco, California**

Local Earth Day Events, TBA

Contact: Harmony Network (707) 869-0989 or Reclaiming (415) 849-0877

**May 4, 1991: Long Beach, California**

Long Beach Womanspirit Conference

Contact: Lunnaea Weatherstone (213) 434-2565

**May 17-19, 1991: Philo, California**

"Magic, Vision and Action: Creating Peace in a World at War" (Women only)

Contact: Jodi at Harmony Network (707) 869-0989

**June 7-9, 1991: Rowe, Massachusetts**

"Powers That Free Us From the Patterns That Bind Us" (Women only)

Contact: Rowe Conference Center (413) 339-4216

**June 12, 1991: Rhode Island**

Benefit for EarthCalls Spiritual Network (To Be Confirmed)

Contact: Harmony Network for Info (707) 869-0989



# Real Peace—Deep Peace

by Nan Cohen

*Well, Well, Well . . . the wararchy is still at it/at it again with even more intensity than usual.*

*The brainwashing techniques via television, radio, newspapers, magazines, etc. are in full force. I find it all to be overwhelming! And throughout my life I have always chosen not to attend to the news—whether by television, radio (yes, even NPR), newspapers, magazines, etc.—because I don't need the patriarchy/wararchy in my life anymore than it is anyway.*

*The madness must stop!*

*I don't know about you, but many feelings and thoughts are circulating through this human be-ing body of mine. Among the feelings are rage, anger, frustration, sadness.*

*The point of this article is: [Now more than ever before] An opportunity is upon us. Peace is an inside job. Real Peace—not the absence of war. Real Peace.*

## REAL PEACE—DEEP PEACE

*Nonviolence as a way of life.*

*What an opportunity! What a challenge! Nonviolence as a way of life.*

*No, it is not easy to adopt this at first. The brainwashing of violence/abuse in its many forms has been conditioned into each of us. In my own life, I have found changing my violence/abuse conditioning is not easy, but worth it. Definitely worth all my efforts. Yes . . . worth it!*

*I want enough of we the people of this world to adopt nonviolence as a way of life. To be devoted to real peace.*

## REAL PEACE—DEEP PEACE

*Then the nonsense will stop.*

*VISUALIZE DEEP PEACE*

*AFFIRM OURSELVES*

*AFFIRM EACH OTHER*



# The Rise of a Pagan Priest/esshood

—Amathaon, Stamen Circle/Circle Cithaeron

(def.: *mundane*—of the world, esp. worldly, as distinguished from heavenly, spiritual, etc.; commonplace, everyday)

In *Reclaiming* issue #40, Starhawk argues that we, as a Goddess/pagan/Wiccan/feminist spirituality movement, must grow into an unprecedented visibility complete with an established cadre of paid teachers and other service providers. I question the wisdom of this path, its necessity, and its much-touted inevitability.

Some years ago (in *Pagana* #21), I authored an article on pagan training where I questioned the advisability of accepting money for Craft instruction. It's an old debate the merits of which have been discussed in many of our community writings. What surprised me was the storm of response it garnered from those who make their living as pagan priest/esses.

The gist of these letters was that, without support from pagan students and sale of Craft-related items or services (divination, psychic consultation, amulet manufacture), those who consider themselves more or less "professional" witches and pagans might have to (gasp!!) find a "mundane" job.

How on earth (pardon the pun) did mundane get to be a dirty word among pagans?

Critics of the *Pagana* article echoed a number of Starhawk's themes, including the suggestion that those who "devote themselves to their Craft" were the "core of the pagan community" and that paganism might die out were it not for their freedom to pursue their activities unfettered by concerns over holding down a job. Other readers warned that cutting off their source of income from pagan instruction would mean that they would be too tired or too frazzled at the end of a work week to take on students. One poor soul even wrote that if she couldn't charge her students for teaching she wouldn't be able to be a high priestess and would have to restrict her Craft involvement to "just participating."

"Just participating"—what a novel concept.

Let us leave aside for another day the lack of any shred of evidence which supports Starhawk's contention that, without those who eke their living by purveying Craft services, "our movement already would have withered." There are worse fates than lack of public visibility—the rise of an organized priest/esshood could be as devastating to neopaganism as ever the Inquisition was.

Apart from the very real temptation to bend ethical rules and engage in shady practices when the phone bill is a month overdue if you're a witch-for-rent, there are equally important considerations that have little or nothing to do with ethics *per se* that argue against establishment of a formal, paid corps of pagans.

Pagans who no longer must earn their daily bread the way the rest of the world does are prone to insulation from real-world struggles, trials and perspectives. Just such an isolationism prompts my Catholic friends to chide the Pope for his unenlightened attempts to proscribe birth control—after all, what does he know about it? If he doesn't play the game, where does he get off dictating its consequences?

The professional witch runs the real risk of such isolation; s/he can no longer appreciate the concerns of the working public which s/he serves. How can one serve a community of which one is no longer a part?

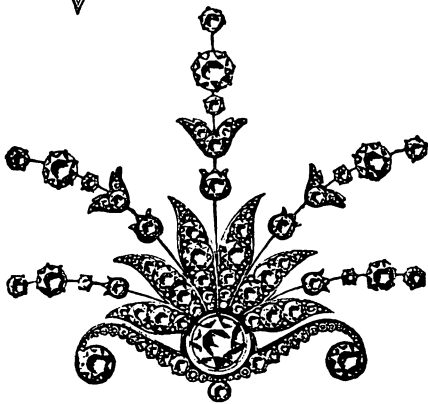
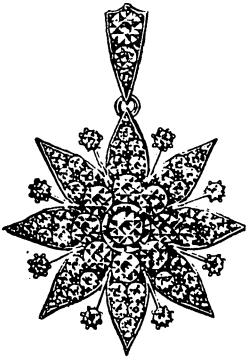
The strength of the pagan movement lies in its integration with, not its departure and isolation from, the rest of the world. While introspection and sacred space are vital, they are no substitute for shared experiences. We must strive for full physical and psychic integration with the world at large, and not seek to restrict our dealings with it to the occasional trip to the gas station.





Important as they have been, “professional” priest/esses and teachers have not been the core of our community, nor will they ever be. They are visible, no doubt they are also productive by virtue of their freedom from other monetary constraints, and they certainly seem to wield great influence in the journals and newsletters that chronicle our movement. But they are not in the frontlines in the office, at the company picnic, behind the cash register or in the employee cafeteria. They are oil on the water of society, and where no mixing occurs, neither does learning—either for the priest/ess or the public.

Our community must support our teachers, elders and priest/esses. We must nurture our young, educate our neighbors and heal our Earth. But we don’t need to hire someone to do it for us.

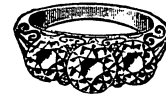


✉ ✉ ✉ **Letters** ✉ ✉ ✉

Greetings—

Here’s my twopence for what it’s worth regarding Starhawk’s “Reflections on the State of the Craft.” While I admit I too enjoy the association with a rather anarchistic, vital and, in these still all too patriarchal times, renegade religion, I think the time has come for building physical structures. We need to have community centers (“church halls,” if you will) to use as networking hubs and venues for classes, worship and events. Face it, the Unitarian centers and ParkRec facilities are nice but they aren’t ours. I think it can be very grounding and empowering to have physical places to call our own; it certainly would be more convenient. We could even have bake sales, although I draw the line at bingo (just kidding). However, I don’t know if we really need formalized clergy—I thought we were all clergy. Although some structure is necessary and desirable as paganism grows let’s not get carried away with it.

With brightest blessings,  
Thalassa



Reisa Stone  
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Reclaiming,

It was a pleasant surprise to see my letter re: Pagan 13-step in the newsletter.

Please note that the contact number has changed from (604)250-9351 to: (604)731-7981. The former number is no longer in service.

Thanks.

Blessed be! Reisa  
P.S. I have been dying for years to see Hannah and Pandora mudwrestle.

## Beltane Poster Aftermath

Reclaiming is very sorry that the Beltane 1990 poster offended or hurt people. No collective member saw it until it was already printed and distributed. Had anyone in Reclaiming seen it, they would not have approved it. We have learned from this experience that we must always review materials that go out under our name. Collective members share the many concerns raised about this issue. Again, we apologize.

—The Reclaiming Collective.

✉ ✉ ✉ **Letters** ✉ ✉ ✉

Dear Reclaiming,

This might be a bit 'old' as they say, but I would like to address the issue regarding the May Day poster from the Summer issue of *Reclaiming Newsletter*:

Coming from a working class poor heritage and being a witch and a lesbian-feminist, I am offended by it. The stature of the woman is not only reminiscent of caricatures of women being chased around desks by bosses but also reeks of classism. The aura is very middle class to my perceptions and extremely "white sanitized" (I dig the sandals, having been a hippie.) I also like the tree. In my own self-criticism (since joining the political left), I have come to know a certain "Addiction to Perfection," and a lot of joy got lost along the way, so I guess I'm trying to be "diplomatic." I still ponder the difference between erotica and pornography and want to maintain my own deep sensuality and sexuality. It seems there is something about the presentation of that woman that is pornographic; and the breasts up-right to the sky is too typical of the patriarchy. As was insinuated in the criticism I read, there may well be more important issues to focus on; on the other hand, perhaps not.

I am left with the same sense I have in many instances: that sometimes women in "amnesia" of their own incest or sexual abuse (or denial), be it covert or blatant, can have a tendency to overlook the perpetuation of these

energies however subtle a fuck it might be. Someone told me in therapy days, the subtle fuck can be the worst kind... That certainly has been my experience.

And again we come back to "classism." It would seem the bottom line of all oppression. The abuse I survived in my home was so much more visible and honest than the abuse I almost didn't survive in the school and church (Ritual Abuse in the name of God HIMSELF).

Is the Goddess really straight? I have my serious doubts... possibly bisexual.

I do not have the fall issue, only winter, so I do not know what responses I might have missed.

I sure do miss California and all its controversy and freedom to address things.

Bless Reclaiming and all its imperfections and the Goddess be in us as we grow and learn and communicate our differences and likenesses.

Artemis

a.k.a. Elisabeth Buchanan

(A Lonesome Witch in Vancouver)

P.S. I say keep both Pandora and Hannah in full operation. I tuned into a post life in witch they are lesbian lovers but homophobic due to their fundamentalist backgrounds. Their tensions and differences are being transmuted into something else when really there is a deep old need for some hot sex.

# Boudicca—a Goddess for London?

by Lindsay River

In the Autumn Equinox newsletter there was a letter from a woman about a ritual done at Kings Cross Station in London in honor of Boudicca as a “Goddess for London.” This sounded like great fun and full of high energy. It is this sort of energy that we can bring home from gatherings such as the one with Starhawk in London—the one where a goddess for London was discussed. But Boudicca as a goddess for London?

As a candidate for London the most likely goddess is the unnamed one who is the deity of the Thames. Many other major Celtic rivers were named for their indwelling goddesses (Severn = Savren, Boyne = Boanna, Seine = Sequana). We don’t know what the Thames was originally called, but the image of Father Thames is obviously late and wrong.

The god Bran is associated with London, though not, it seems, his sister Branwen, for she died heartbroken on the shore of Wales. His head was carried to London and buried at the White Mound. This is where the Tower of London stands and Bran’s totem, the raven, is obviously the totemic creature of the city as well as Britain itself (“when the ravens leave the Tower disaster will be imminent”). This may possibly give us an association with Morgan le Fay and the Morrigan (“the raven Morrigan is wild for blood”).

I would also offer Brighde—St. Bride’s Church in Fleet Street, which was probably built on a much earlier Brighde shrine, retains a feeling of peace and presence especially in the crypt. The River Brent is named for Brighde. Understandably some women may prefer a stronger more active presence than Brighde (though she ruled smithcraft and probably was a warrior goddess in some manifestations). For them, the Morrigan may appeal.



However, I am rather horrified at the equation of the very human Boudicca with a goddess. I know there have been many meldings of heroines and heroes with goddesses and gods through the ages, and it is often hard to tell whether someone who was originally a goddess or god became a heroine, or vice versa. Bran and Branwen fit into this ambivalent category, though I tend to think they were divine first. Isis and Osiris are sometimes described not as divine, but as early folk heroes, leaders and teachers of the arts of civilization. Perhaps some of the human beings who were later deified were as controversial in their own time as Boudicca.

Admirable as she was as a strong leader who fought Roman imperialism and protested at the rape of her daughters and her own flogging at the hands of the Romans, I would be very careful about giving her Goddess status. Boudicca gave Colchester no mercy and so he was burned at her command. Virtually all the Roman children and women who were captured by Boudicca’s soldiers were burned and there was horrific loss of life. According to Frank Delaney (The Celts, Grafton Books 1989, p42), when her soldiers reached London they committed atrocities on Roman women that I would prefer not to repeat. But this source is not a pro-women one, and Delaney may be propagating misogynist misinformation against Boudicca here. One could also say that Boudicca could not be held responsible for the behavior and lack of discipline of her soldiers. However, I would like to know a lot more about Boudicca (has any woman done extensive research?) before I ever venerated her as a “goddess.”



Boudicca does not even accord with my idea of a destroying goddess. Though Death, as the Destroying Goddess, takes all, including the innocent and the young, melding the Destroyer with individual historical women (I use the word historical deliberately here) might be seen to give divine inspiration and the excuse of divine possession to oppressive behavior in the real world. (It is of course entirely possible that under patriarchy, goddesses have been invoked to justify outrages against enemy peoples).

Let's be careful of the glamor of the powerful woman, goddess-like as she seems. Do we want to deny that women in power (whether political, social or domestic) are also capable of abuse of that power? It's very easy to romanticize the past and the famous women we seek as our heroines. That women have been powerful and not always passive under oppression is information we need. To assume that women do not ever abuse power

is naive, and our hopeful optimism about the essential "goodness" of women can be dangerous. It can lead us to situations where women and children who have been physically or sexually abused by women, rather than men, are often unheard, unbelieved and unsupported.

This is a far cry from doing a high energy women's ritual at Kings Cross Station and I am sure Boudicca's shade, tormented as it may be, must have been helped by her veneration. But the passage of time does not change and heal all. Would it not be better to apply the same standards of criticism to Boudicca and other remote women leaders as we would to Margaret Thatcher or Indira Ghandi?



## An Open Letter to the Pagan community

[Before the war in the Gulf began, we received the open letter printed below from Sam Wagar of the Pagans for Peace Network, who writes in his cover letter "... With the rapidly increasing danger of war I'm forced out of my somewhat apathetic position of the past couple of years. I am beginning to advocate sedition and all non-violent means of resistance to war. It has crept up on me gradually—much like the beginning of the Second World War must have to people at that time, or Vietnam. Except that this is a war that will be fought not to stop Saddam Hussein and protect the right of self-determination for small countries (when has the United States ever given much of a damn about that? and I'm sure not going to cry any tears for the absolute monarchs of Kuwait) but to continue the ecologically destructive exploitive consumption patterns of the industrial countries just a few years longer.

"Not even simply fighting a war for the profits of Exxon, evil enough, but fighting to continue to destroy the Earth through the greenhouse effect, the pollution of petrochemicals, the automobile, the artificial fertilizers and so on.

"I think a specifically Pagan radical opposition to this war must centre on that objection—that it will perpetuate the system that is destroying the Earth. I'm not a pacifist in the sense that I think all killing is wrong, nor that there were no 'just wars' (though when any war ultimately threatens the nuclear option that time is past), so I'd be hypocritical arguing on the basis of killing alone etc.

"I don't know what, if, Pagan religious leaders can say but I'd like us to say something. ..."]

Sisters and Brothers,

The undersigned Priestesses and Priests, concerned by the growing threat\* of a war between the United States and other industrial countries and the Republic of Iraq wish to urge all members of all Pagan paths to consider the following:

1. The consumption patterns of this society, in particular its reliance on fossil fuels, primarily oil, are not sustainable in the long run. The longer we shape our way of life around increasing levels of energy use and the longer we put off the inevitable adjustment away from fossil fuels the greater will be the suffering involved in the transition to a sustainable way of life. This war is being fought to put off that adjustment a few more years.
2. The greatest factor contributing to the greenhouse effect and global climate change, as well as the greatest source of pollution of the air in the cities, is burning of fossil fuels, primarily oil. Unless the emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> are dramatically cut, the breadbelts will become dustbowls, the fishing grounds will be infertile, and tremendous starvation will ensue. This war is being fought to continue the easy access to cheap fossil fuels which has prevented the development of reasonable alternatives which are not harmful to the environment.
3. Petro-chemicals are used to make plastics, pesticides, fertilizers. The over-use of all of these chemicals has damaged the ecology world-wide in a thousand ways.

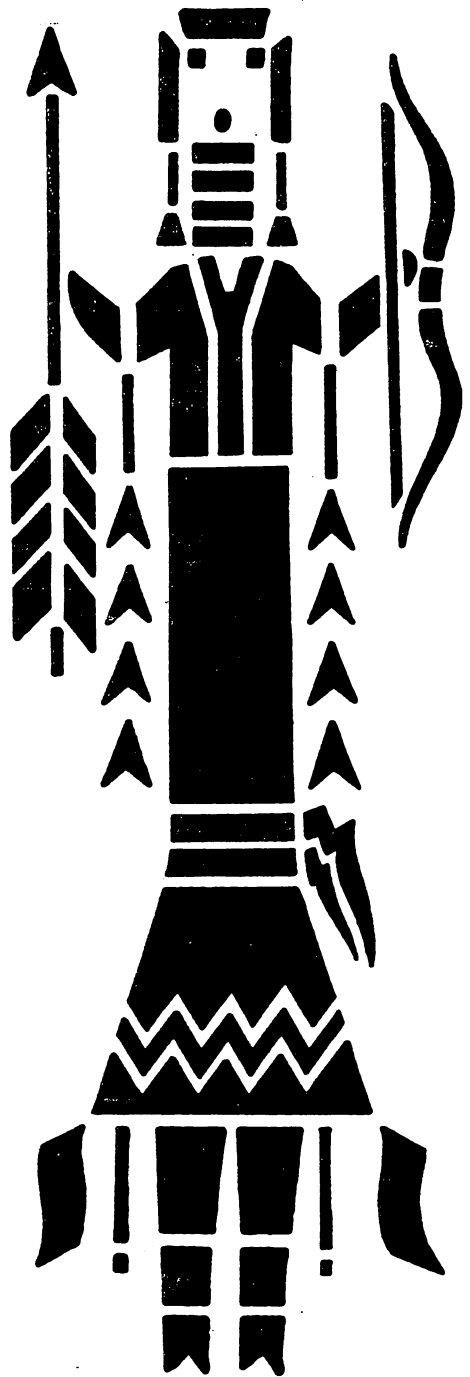
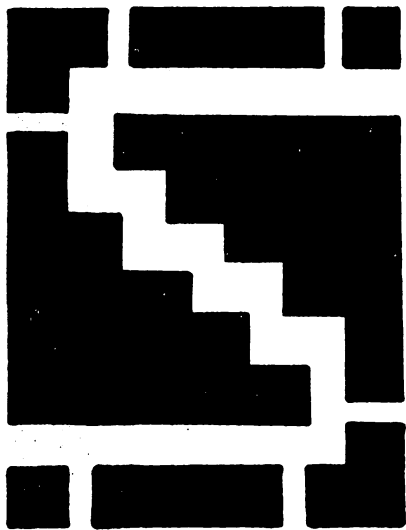


We see the prospect of thousands, probably tens of thousands, of people dying to allow this form of industrial society easy access to oil. These people will die so that the transition that must occur if humankind is to survive as a civilized species—from a wasteful and environmentally destructive social order to an ecologically balanced and sustainable system—can be put off for a few more years.

This is unjustifiable to us as Pagan Priesthood and we urge all of you to resist this coming war in whatever way that you can.

Blessed Be, in peace  
Samuel Wagar  
Pagans for Peace Network  
P.O.B. 86134  
North Vancouver, B.C.  
V7L 4J5 Canada

*\*[This letter was written before the outbreak of war. We urge our readers to correspond with Sam Wagar, who may by now have an updated letter for us to endorse.]*



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## Announcements

☞ **Global Calling**—Citizens from all over the globe are signing the “Earth Covenant,” a pact among peoples to respect the planet and the life it sustains. Drafted in September 1989 by representatives from a number of concerned organizations, including Audubon President Peter A.A. Berle, the treaty has since been signed by several thousand people from more than 40 countries.

The Earth Covenant calls on people to “act and live in a way that preserves the natural life processes of the Earth and respects all species and their habitats.” It recognizes the right of all people to a healthy environment and calls on signatories to work for laws that protect the environment. Signatures to the treaty will be presented at the 1992 World Conference on the Environment in Brazil.

If you'd like more information on the Earth Covenant, write to Global Education Associates, Suite 456, 475 Riverside Dr., New York, N.Y. 10115.

*(ed. note: We received this clipping anonymously. Thank you.)*

☞ **Faggot Witch Camp II**—is being planned for gay men who find spiritual/political dimension to their sexuality and who also follow a Wiccan tradition that combines feminism, earth-centered values and goddess spirituality. The event, planned for late summer/early fall 1991 in the midwest, will include an exploration of gay spirituality, fun and games, workshops, networking, and lots of ritual. The gathering is a drug- and alcohol-free event. For more information and/or to begin the registration process, write to: F.W.C., Box 45107, Kansas City, MO 64111



☞ The plunder of Native American lands is nowhere more imminent than at Big Mountain, where traditional Dineh (Navajo) and Hopi have resisted relocation since the 1974 Navajo-Hopi Relocation Act. Bush's recently appointed Commissioner of Navajo-Hopi Indian Relocation has stated that his first priority is to remove all Navajo from the so-called Hopi Partitioned Lands. Beside the poverty that afflicts all Indian reservations, people of the Big Mountain area are facing increased livestock confiscation, water diversion, police harassment, and visits from “relocation counselors.” Nevertheless, hundreds of families are resisting these tactics, determined to remain on their ancestral land. Their resistance has inspired a broad spectrum of support. For more information, call the Veterans Peace Action Teams at 415-753-2130, or the Big Mountain Support Group/Weaving Project at 415-664-1847.

☞ **HELP! We Need Your Blood!** If you can donate blood into Reclaiming's account (#1913) at Irwin Memorial Blood Bank (567-6400 for information/appointment), please do so. If you or a loved one needs blood for surgery, etc., contact Rose at 821-3336 for transfer. If the Goddess blesses you with good health, please share and give the gift of life. **And many thanks to our donors.**

☞ **Goddess Gathers A Monthly Community Gathering of Womenspirits!** Come share your journey, connect with sisters, commune with the Earth . . . **Time:** The last Sunday of each month, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. **Place:** The Barn, 104 S. Park Way, Santa Cruz\* **Donation:** \$5.00 per person (more if you can, less if you can't). **Facilitated by:** Shekhinah, long-time local wise-woman. Also: Presentations from Local Luminaries, Meditations, Healings. For more information call: (408) 423-7639 or (408) 426-7923. (\*Address subject to change—please call.)



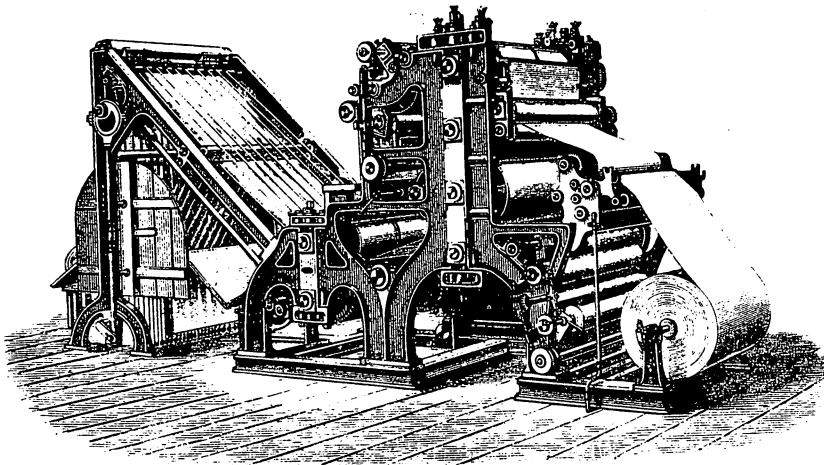
☛ **Women in Prison** Are you aware of any *good* programs at your institution? I am helping to write a guide book about useful programs for women in prison. The book will be used to develop new programs using the best existing ones as models. Though this guide won't create immediate changes in prison conditions, we think it can *lead* to better programs in the areas that matter to you. If you know of programs in the areas of health care, counseling, education, job-training, pre-release or work-furlough, art and creative writing, family and children, drug treatment, or any other area *you think is important*, please write to: Tatiana Schreiber, Education Development Center, 55 Chapel St., Newton, MA 02160. Also, write if you have any questions about the project. Thanks! (This project is funded by the National Institute of Corrections, a government agency.)

☛ **Cambridge** is an international non-profit correspondence organization mostly for teens but also open to adults. Based in America with members from all around the world, Cambridge informs people on how bad the environmental status is and how to change it through the way we live and the respect that we need to show to the earth. Write to Cambridge for more information at: Cambridge, P.O. Box 1926, Casper, WY 82601-2.

☛ A recent Supreme Court Decision opened up Public Schools to meetings by student christian prayer groups. This of course means that a group who wishes to meet to study Witchcraft may do so. The Association of Cymmry Wicca is offering a free active ACW membership to any Pagan religious group who wishes student members of its congregation to meet in a Public School *and* will agree to abide by their Bylaws. For more information, contact Association of Cymmry Wicca, P.O. Box 674884, Marietta, Georgia 30067 (404) 423-9585.

☛ “13th Heaven,” the first-ever goddess cable TV show starring Zsuzsanna Budapest is playing all over the Bay Area. This entertaining and educational show on the Goddess hosts different guest artists and rituals every month. Call 444-7724 for station listings and times.

☛ **P.I.R. Newsletter** is a new publication for Pagans in twelve-step recovery programs. Contact: **P.I.R. Newsletter, c/o Bekki, 6560 S.R. 356, New Marshfield, OH 45766.**



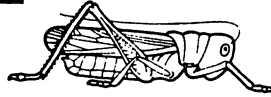
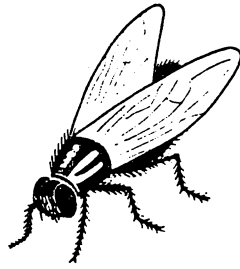


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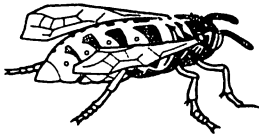
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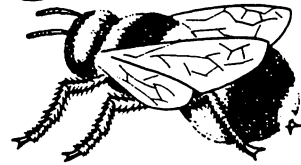


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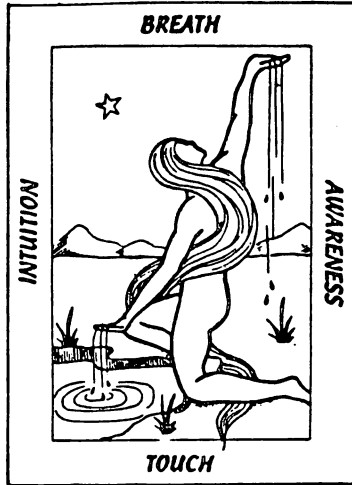


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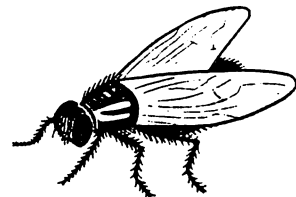
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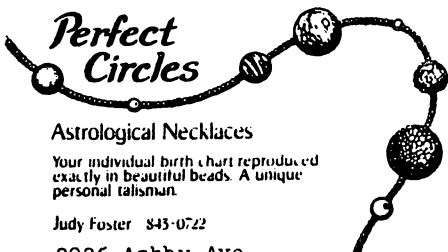
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