

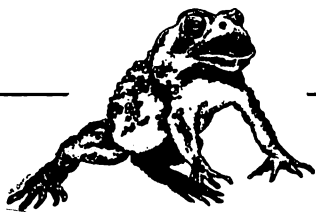
RECLAIMING

newsletter



No.51 SUMMER 1993

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Reclaiming
A Center for Feminist Spirituality
P.O. Box 14404
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Newsletter Submissions: The Newsletter encourages people to submit articles, letters, or graphics related to political, pagan or spiritual issues and happenings. Submissions on 3-1/2" diskettes, created in Wordperfect or Microsoft Word, make the job of the Newsletter staff much easier. Please always include a hard copy of your submission, just in case something funny happens during layout. We will return your diskettes - just be sure we know where to send them. **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.

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Fall Deadline is **Monday, August 2, 1993**

Reclaiming Events Line - (510) 236-4645



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

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This Newsletter was miraculously put together by Rebecca, Patti, Robin, Julie, Jody, Falcon and Laura amid M1000 blasts, serious bouts of Spring Fever, *The Subversive Stitch*, and a zillion other projects.

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More Reflections on Initiation: One Witch's Journey Home

By Marianne (aka Rosamund)

Anyone who becomes deeply involved with the Craft sooner or later ends up grappling with the question of initiation. And just as 40 years ago when the Wiccan revival was only a gleam in Gerald Gardner's crystal ball, Witches today have three choices in this regard:

1. What I tend to call "formal" initiation, for lack of a better word, whereby Witches who are already initiates of a particular Craft tradition train you in the mysteries associated with that tradition. After a certain period—typically at least a year and a day—they conduct a ritual that formally acknowledges you as priest or priestess of their tradition. These human initiators also might give you challenges intended to spur personal transformation—always a big part of the initiatory process—and which usually you must complete prior to the initiation ceremony. [See Jody's article in the Winter 1992 issue of the Reclaiming Newsletter for a fuller description of initiation in the Reclaiming tradition.]

2. Self initiation, whereby you pretty much go it alone in the terrain of the Gods, the mysteries, and personal transformation. When you feel ready, you perform a ceremony of your own devising acknowledging yourself as priest or priestess, usually but not necessarily of the "generic" Craft as opposed to a particular tradition.

3. No initiation, which means you elect to forego ritual acknowledgement

of yourself as priest/ess and Witch, whether you are self-trained or trained by others. In the sense I'm using the term, "no initiation" does NOT mean that a transformative encounter cannot occur between you and the Gods.

I suspect that all three choices will be with us for some time, even though there is no longer a shortage of initiated Witches who in turn can formally initiate others. People drawn to the Craft typically are the independent sort, to say the least, and many will continue to opt for self- or no initiation because they abhor anything that apparently smacks of the conferring of power and status by an external authority. (That's not what formal initiation is, but it can look that way on the surface.)

It follows that a certain ambivalence regarding self- or no initiation also will be with us for some time. I've sensed this ambivalence among members of several Witch communities, who tend both to espouse an egalitarian line regarding people who dedicate their lives to the Gods, and to reserve certain privileges and/or responsibilities for the formally initiated. I've also sensed this ambivalence in myself, particularly when I had to figure out what to do about my own initiation.

What I did was to perform a self initiation, then a little over five years later begin formal initiation into the Reclaiming tradition. The rest of this article will be about that process, and why I chose to



do both. My purpose here is not to answer the question “which Witch is the witchier Witch?”—formally initiated, self-initiated, non-initiated, or any and all of the above—but rather to spark discussion and debate about a subject that needs to be brought further out into the open. By sharing my experiences I also want to provide something of a map for other intrepid souls who might be considering self initiation. In a way this is the article I wish I could have read before embarking on that journey, because to be forewarned about such matters is to be at least a little bit forearmed.

I’d like to begin with my own conclusions about self initiation and formal initiation, based entirely on my experiences.

Self initiations are valid. It follows that if you self initiate, you will change and change thoroughly, and it could hurt. A lot. Even so, there are things formal initiations can do that self initiations cannot.

After several years of study on my own and two more years of taking Reclaiming classes, I self-initiated on Samhain

1986. The reason I chose to go for initiation of any stripe was that my attitude toward the Craft had evolved from “What a gorgeous alternative to patriarchal religion” to “Good heavens, this stuff is really REAL (but only as metaphor).” Which is what a few wildly successful spells will do for you. It also felt like the time was right to dedicate my life to the Goddess and God, and besides, I just love a good ritual.

My reason for choosing self initiation was equally straightforward if not so sublime: I am both shy and solitary by nature, so I had yet to form close enough relationships with several Reclaiming teachers to ask for initiation at their hands. I worried about whether self initiation would make me a “real” Witch, but I was too impatient to wait for the conditions to ripen that would enable a different choice.

As I’ve said, when you self initiate you devise the ceremony yourself. Fortunately by ’86 quite a few excellent books about the Craft were available, of which several contained information on performing initiations. So I pulled strands

from Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance*, Doreen Valiente's *Witchcraft For Tomorrow*, and Janet and Stewart Farrar's *The Witches' Way*, and wove together quite a lovely initiation ceremony if I do say so. I then picked Halloween as the day to do the deed, which in retrospect I'd say demonstrated both a fine sense of poetry and a gleeful naivete about the spirit world that bordered on idiocy.

Everything was proceeding as planned until I got to the part where you give yourself the Fivefold Kiss. I had just kissed the tips of my fingers and was bending down to touch my toes (which is how you do it when you're initiating solo), when I got the distinct impression that **SOMEBODY ELSE WAS KISSING MY FEET**. The impression lasted only a few moments and I could see my unexpected visitor only out of the corners of my eyes, but somebody else was definitely there, and the somebody was a male.

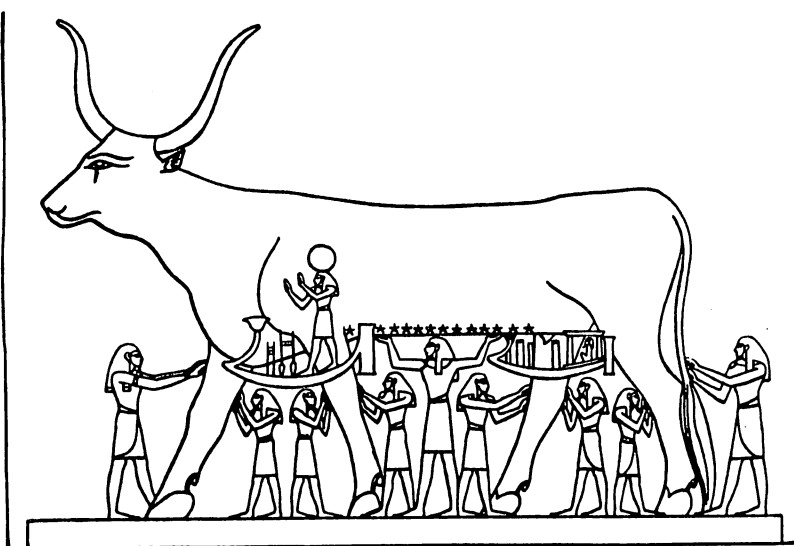
That was when I realized—in the words of the immortal Victor Anderson—as transmitted by the inimitable Francesca Dubie—

THIS IS NOT A METAPHOR!

Ok fine. I'd like to report that my friendly apparition wondrously validated my chosen path, but it didn't feel that way at the time. I was so scared I nearly threw up. I managed to finish the ceremony and collapsed into bed, thinking, "Thank goodness **THAT**'s over!"

It wasn't, of course. That ritual was the beginning of a personal descent experience that has lasted more than five years and has borne all the trademarks of an UnderWorld journey—in most cases the *sine qua non* of genuine initiation into Western esoteric traditions.

For one thing, during those years I experienced an eruption of psychoactivity, both voluntarily and involuntarily, in dreams and in trance. (I'll leave it at that, since one's adventures and encounters while tiptoeing through Faery tend to be absolutely riveting to oneself and to no one else.) More to the point, I also experienced what has felt like a never-ending onslaught of trials, tribulations, and downright suffering that I think even the Bud-



dha might consider a tad excessive, given the short time span over which it all occurred.

I should interject here that one reason for the particular intensity of my initiatory process might be that I jump-started the thing by performing another ritual about 10 months after the first one, on the morning of the Harmonic Convergence. (I will never learn.) Now, I have a constitutional aversion to anything that smells New Age-y, and like several people I could name more than once snidely referred to that much-heralded event as the Harmonica Virgins. But I decided to do my bit on the Big Day anyway just in case the white lighters knew something I didn't. (This was a variation on the Hedging Of The Bet, whereby the esotericist, at the point he or she suspects the end is drawing near, makes a little visit to the local rabbi, minister, or Catholic priest JUST IN CASE.) So during the wee hours of that morning I went outside, lit a purple candle, looked up at the pre-dawn sky, looked down at the quiet earth, and asked to be used for the healing.

I was shortly to discover two things. First, the Powers That Be take you very, very seriously when you say things like that. Second, They are likely to put you through quite the tempering process to get you in shape for your self-appointed task. I have decided that this is so not because the Gods are sadistic, but because the job for which increasing numbers of us are volunteering (thank goodness!) is of such magnitude that it requires people who are reasonably fit emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. And precious few of us have not been twisted in some way.

So you knock on the gate, and the Guardian opens it and ushers you into the realm of the Death-in-Life Goddess, who goes by whatever name you choose to call Her—Kali, Hecate, Ceridwen, Morgan, Anna, the Washer at the Ford, the Night Mare, Oya, or simply the Power of Taking. And She just has a field day with you. The Lady smiles and says, "Welcome, child! I've been waiting for you. Now come here and stretch out on my anvil for a while."

During my time on the anvil, I endured the following:

- My father's death.
- The simultaneous ending of two business partnerships—mine and my husband's—which left us *sans* financial resources three months after our wedding.
- Following that, my husband's loss of a long and weary succession of jobs, which had the effect of plunging us from cozy two-income security to apparently permanent financial instability, not to mention precipitating a year-long period of marital discord that provided endless entertainment for the folks in the neighboring apartment building, who once climbed up to their roof to get ringside seats.
- A particularly vicious withdrawal from nicotine (I had abused nicotine gum for three years in an attempt to wean myself from a 2-1/2-packs-a-day cigarette addiction), which led to my first-ever experience of prolonged clinical depression and plans to commit suicide, as well as the mother of all anxiety attacks, which lasted nine days non-stop last May and probably equated with what people used to call

a nervous breakdown.

--And the culmination: Last July brought with it the onset of a repetitive strain injury in both my hands and arms, which pulled me off payroll and onto workers' comp for five months and put me through the worst physical pain I have ever experienced. (My RSI took the form of acute tendinitis, for which doctors refuse to prescribe effective pain medication because pain is the only symptom.) This injury has left me with a permanent if minor disability and ended up costing me my job of four years.

Not a pretty picture, huh? Yet I maintain that all of the above were true initiatory ordeals and not the result of either a particularly good curse or particularly bad karma because a) I am here to tell the tale, b) my husband and I are still together and quite happy about it, and c) the events did what initiatory ordeals are supposed to do. That is, they forced me to confront much of what was stricken within me and dragged me, kicking and screaming, considerably closer to an authentic way of being.

Which is all very well, I'm sure some of you are saying right about now, except for two questions. First, why in the name of all that's holy would anyone put themselves through such a hellacious experience? There are other ways to get a life. The whole gamut of psychotherapies comes to mind. So does the plethora of twelve-step programs. Eastern meditation practices—particularly the Buddhist ones such as Zen and Vipassana—work quite nicely for many people. And there's always the tried and true method of growing older and wiser.

I've got two responses. First, not every Craft initiation—self or otherwise—has to be as, er, theatrical as mine was.

It seems that if you've already undergone a variation on the descent theme and learned the lessons such experiences are meant to teach, then it's not necessary to swing on a meathook twice. For example, a friend had what sounds like nothing short of a blast during her initiatory period: most of the challenges she received, both from the Goddess and from her human initiators, amounted to a gentle kick in the butt to get her to do some things she had long wanted to do anyway. It's worth noting, however, that she had already harrowed Hell during her final year as a practicing alcoholic.

Second, there's that famous mystery saying—I think it's from *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius—about how initiates see the sun at midnight. Like all mystery sayings, this one has as many meanings as there are initiates to claim it for their own. What it means to me is this: on the night I hit rock bottom, I felt for the first time the faintest intimations of a Love so immeasurably vast and so utterly accepting—no, utterly cherishing—of everything I was, warts and all, that I would endure each excruciating minute of the last five years twice over if such was the price of finding that sun.

So a self initiation can be valid indeed. Which brings me to the final question: then why pursue formal initiation?

The only answer I have is an exceedingly personal one, which will have to do:

Everything that happened during my self initiation was designed to teach me to surrender and to trust. And it dawned

on me about a year and a half ago that what I finally had to surrender to was love. Not love with a capital "L" this time, but simple human love, and joy.

I have in mind an illustration from Nor Hall's wonderful book, *The Moon & The Virgin*, which depicts an ancient frieze of a young goddess emerging from the UnderWorld. She is thin and haggard—her ribs jut out—so we know that She has been alone in the UnderWorld a long time. But She does not rise alone. Hands reach down from the top of the frieze to pull her back up to the land of the living. And because those hands are there—because they have been waiting for her—we know that they are hands of love.

As I finish writing this, it is the afternoon before the day of my Reclaiming initiation ceremony, so I do not yet know what my ritual emergence from the UnderWorld will be like. But I trust that at some point tomorrow afternoon or evening I will have to surrender myself into loving hands—into my initiators' human hands. And perhaps I will

at last know, not just in my head but in my guts, what all of us eventually must come to know: that who we really are finds its deepest and most joyous expression when we acknowledge that we are not alone, that we are in fact profoundly connected to one another and to everything that lives and breathes and has its being on this beautiful, suffering planet.

So my final thoughts on initiation are these: self initiation can take you down to that essential place of despair and surrender and, finally, hope. But it is initiation at the hands of others that can bring you all the way home.

* * *

Thanks to Hilary Valentine for challenging me to write this article, to Francesca Dubie for providing wisdom and perspective at a critical time, and to Cybele, Margaret, Bessie, and Sue Running Deer: you are all part of me.



THE TWELVE STEPS OF VERA AND NERO (An Inquiry into Pendulum Whiplash)

NERO PLEADS HIS CASE: Step I

Nero muses
If heat is motion
Then the elemental fire is motion
Ether's vampire other to a stoic
Motion feeds /
Count Motion regulates, quantifies and qualifies
The life bound appearances
Of water, air and earth
To be born a fire sign is a blessed thing indeed
But very transient
Motion in manifest
Manifest motion
Or "I'd like to manifest that motion please!"
A moment of the momentum of motion combusts
Like putting on the brakes
Friction becomes a fact more fluid
Nero pleads his case
Time runs past and future
And the present is the break
It brings new meaning into skin burn
And sex
"Can't see the fire 'cause smoke gets in your eyes"
Like a crowded dance of ecstatic molecules
Of atoms relentless to the end
To the point
"Hot pulsating electrons Batman!
Infinity in perpetual motion!"
"Take it like a Templar Robin
Knowledge is an enema
Nature abhors a vacuum!!!"
So the church of the cosmic polarity sing:
"We're all one with the infinite cum
Forever and ever and ever ..."
And Jesus played guitar like a ring in a bell
Go dogma go Pan go



NERO INCARNATES AGAIN AS VERA: STEP II

Scenes of a class struggle
Gases joined with solids
Iron rusted
One atom
Under the Goddess
Invisible
And forces for all
Mother
Stretch and stiff
Rubber or wax
When the shaman starts to sham
Bounce and recoil
Solidly held in push 'n pull
Wash and dry
Laundered money means more than chickens
To a modern saint
There's a way to attract
And in the way to squeeze beyond
Repelled like a cornered cat
Electricity divides
Explosive water
Hyena and the ox
Feed on the questions
Feed on each other
Feed
They wade in doubt
As the riptide of motion
Carries them deep
To realms of Music
And Nero's laughter



- D.R. Orton

Stay tuned for further adventures -- VERA BREAKS DOWN (NERO TAKES ADVANTAGE): STEP III, and NERO'S POSSESSION: STEP IV -- will appear in the Fall Newsletter.

THE REAL SCOOP ABOUT WITCH CAMP

by Aurora

I wouldn't know what they do in Vancouver, but I suspect the Michigan Wiccan Summer Intensive is just a fancy name for a fat farm. Before you dismiss me as some lunatic from the fat people's liberation movement, check out the evidence below, and ask yourself, "What exactly do fat farms do?" They increase your exercise and decrease your calories to produce rapid weight loss — right?

Increased Exercise

The opening ritual of the 1991 camp involved a five-mile peri-meter hike while chanting -- exactly what they do in boot camp to harden up recruits. Have you ever thought there might be a reason for all the simultaneous singing and dancing we do during camp rituals, other than "raising energy?" How about burning energy? Singing while dancing is a more effective workout than running, for Goddess's sake.

The 1992 camp actually added early morning "Witch Aerobics," led by Sister Donald. And then there was that ritual where a whistle-toting athlete called "Sarge" marched to "The Temple of Alienation," where some of us were perfectly happy resting our bones in front of the flashlight operated TV, or in the Rope Meditation Room. But no-o-

o, they had to send "Subversive Fairies" to whisk us off to Fairy Land at a run, where, breathless, we fended off energetic fairies who were constantly provoking us to chase them and jump over imaginary fires. The whole thing - fairy dialect, Fata Morganas, and costumed Quarter elementals - was probably an elaborate ruse to get us to exercise from 8:00-11:00 pm.

Decreased Calories

How many fat vegetarians do you know? Especially those who don't do eggs, dairy, fats or sugar. That's pretty much the diet they put you on at camp. Oh sure, they serve chicken once a week to stave off total mutiny - but not enough for everyone to have one piece. (There was some lame excuse about freezers breaking down in 90 degree weather.) We also get sugar-free apple pie once a week, after they cleverly get us to burn up twice the calories by having us gather, haul, and peel several bushels.

Other Sneaky Tricks

Deep Chakra Cleaning and Genuine Psychic Experiences are an integral part of the camp program, but maybe not for the reasons you think. Both cause your metabolism to speed up.

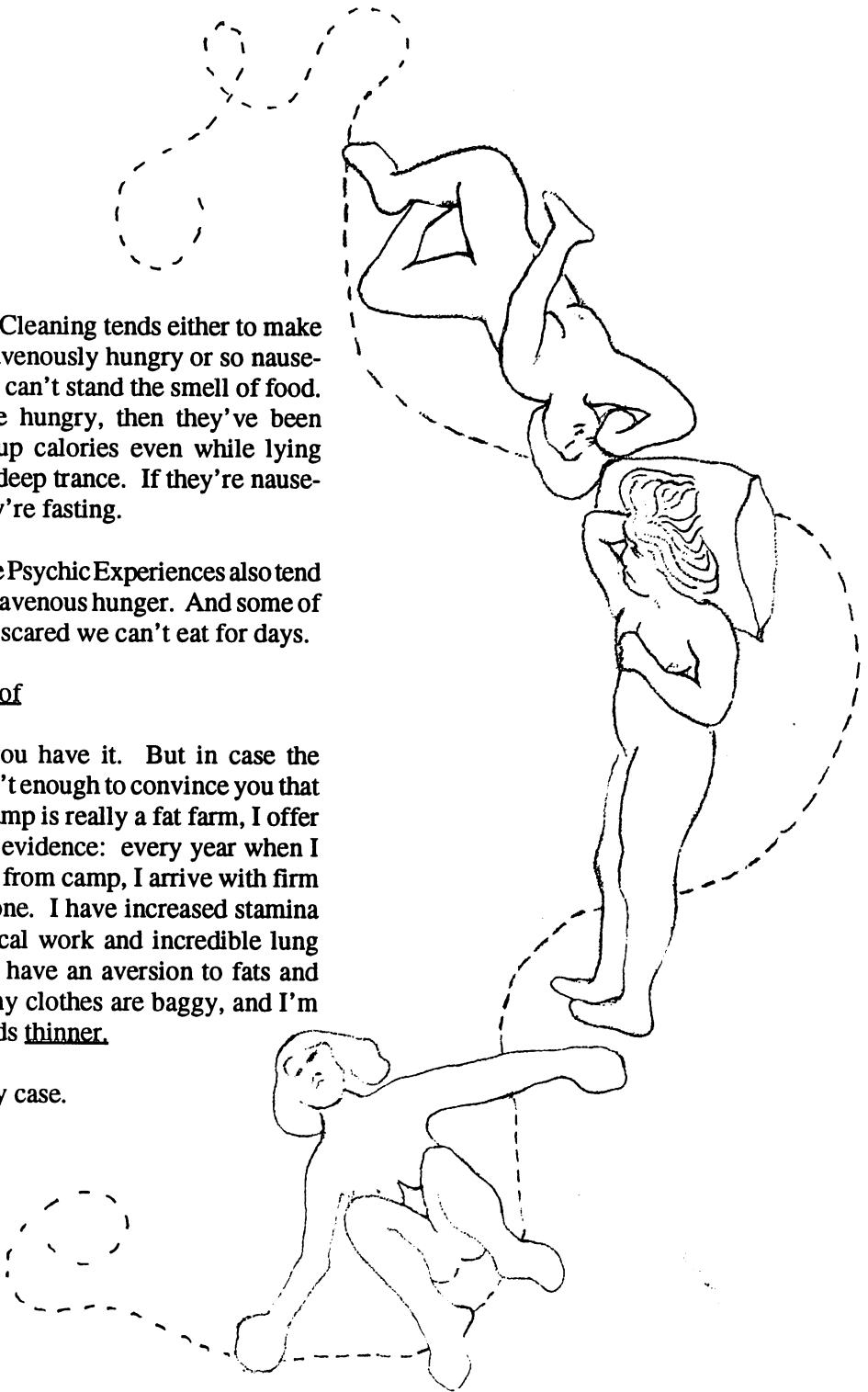
Chakra Cleaning tends either to make people ravenously hungry or so nauseated they can't stand the smell of food. If they're hungry, then they've been burning up calories even while lying down in deep trance. If they're nauseated, they're fasting.

Genuine Psychic Experiences also tend to cause ravenous hunger. And some of us get so scared we can't eat for days.

Final Proof

There you have it. But in case the above isn't enough to convince you that Witch Camp is really a fat farm, I offer this final evidence: every year when I get home from camp, I arrive with firm muscle tone. I have increased stamina for physical work and incredible lung power. I have an aversion to fats and sweets, my clothes are baggy, and I'm 5-7 pounds thinner.

I rest my case.



Passages

“A Rather Florid Display”

by Robin Weaver

Strawberries & primroses, wild garlic & sage. With the drought over, Spring rains have bedecked the hills and gardens in gay (& het) abandon. The “Cecil Brunner” out front has finally established itself, putting forth “delicate buds and showy masses of bloom,” as the rose catalog might say. It’s all Ma Nature’s way of reminding us to look long, breathe deep, and enjoy.

• • •

Ostara found two handfuls of children and assorted adults searching for eggs in Sutro Park. Laura K. organized the ritual hunt, a big success with the younger set. But the lateness of her assistants (!blush!) raised threats that in the future “all the good food will be eaten before the ritual and laggards will get the leftovers!”

Signs of new life abound: Congratulations to Karen & Craig on their new addition, Manya Lin. Kudos to Marian on completing her degree and getting a job (in her own field, even!) Congratulations to Delaney, who survived the passage out of Boyhood, through the Long Night of the Men’s Weekend, and out into the great sea of (Young) Adulthood. No small thanks due to the wonderful space provided by Celia and Maraquita at Salamander Camp. Friends joined him at home with the Oak Folk for a warm welcome on his return from that other world. A sample of his talents can be seen on the cover of this very newsletter, his artistic gift to the community.

Beltaine

A pleasant May morn found a full parking lot at Inspiration Point in Tilden Park. Berkeley Morris raised their rowdy wake up call to the sun, and then we all joined in for a go at the old dance, Sellinger’s Round.

After noon folks gathered at Fort Miley to celebrate the May. Carol coordinated the festivities, Patti & Karl put together the Pole, the doll was re-dressed by Julie. Theresa led the procession, Jack offered an oral invocation of sex in its many forms, and our own cast of thousands (OK. 50 or so) wrapped the May pole.

More Morris

The following weekend I stumbled on a whole field of morris dancers. Actually, Shannon spotted them in Sharon Meadow, gathering for their Seventh Annual California Morris Ale. “Look Daddy, morris dancers!” And there they were, maybe 200 of them. A troupe of morris dancers is called a “side”, and there were around 18 sides there. They’d come from up Victoria way and down in San Diego; they had names like Bedlam Bells, and Mossyback, and Tiddely Cove; they dressed in a motley

of royal blue and forest green and fuschia and black and gold; and they brought with them sticks and swords, hobby horses and fools, and a pleasing racket of concertinas and whistles and drums. Hosted by Deer Creek Morris Men, Fools' Choice, and Mayfield Morris & Sword, three sides from Palo Alto, it was a wondrous sight.

And speaking of sides, keep your eyes open for San Francisco's White Rat's Morris. These Queer Leather Morris Dancers were seen at the Lesbian/Gay March on Washington, have danced at the Folsom Street Fair, and recently took issue with the *SF Bay Times* for "marginalizing" their community (of a dozen or so). These Rats have sharp snouts, so be on the lookout for them.

The Bonny, Bonny Broom

You know the old saw: "In spring a young one's fancy turns to thought of love." Well, it seems as if one of our delightful and engaging bachelors may have taken an extra turn. I have it on good authority that the bridal registry at a large department store called his fiancee to let her know that the cad was registered with them twice! I guess that was some May dance! And here we thought he had cold feet! After some quick work with a golden tongue (and a bit of simpering from the sidelines) all is well once again, and in plenty of time for Juno's month.

• • •

Parents & surrogates, cousins of every degree: we're looking for cute stories about our kids. It doesn't have to be too elaborate. Wisdom beyond their years, crowning achievements, big adventures, the time they explained to their elementary school teacher that "My mom/dad/aunt/etc. is a *real* Witch!", that sort of thing. Immortalize them in print, indulge our sentimental hearts, fill column space. Do I mean you? If you're reading this, then probably, yes. Come on, now, self identify. Reclaiming students and alumni, frequenters of Reclaiming public rituals, Spiral Dancers, Reclaiming initiates, members of circles that developed (however circuitously) from the above, and family and lovers of the lot will be considered guilty until proven uninterested. Divorce, ideological schism, gender revision, and other lovers' spats do not annul this bond. Who counts as kids? The obvious, of course, but adult children of adult children will be considered if their stories are cute enough.

• • •

*The cuckoo comes in April
She sings her song in May
In June she changes tune
And in July she flies away.*



Blessed be.

THE PINK TRIANGLE RITUAL

by Starhawk

Among the millions targeted and murdered by the Nazi regime were thousands of gay people. In the camps, the badge they wore to identify them as a group was the pink triangle. That is the origin of the symbol which today has come to stand for gay pride.

On April 23, 1993, in conjunction with many events surrounding the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation on Sunday the 25th, I co-led a ritual at the new Holocaust Memorial in Washington DC, to remember and honor those who died under the sign of the pink triangle. My co-leader was Dr. Elias Farajaje Jones, an African American ritualist, bisexual activist, and professor at Howard University. Alina Ever, who works with Reclaiming's multi-cultural ritual group and is involved with linking Jewish and pagan spirituality, worked with us on planning the ritual and provided a great deal of research and information.

The ritual was a challenge to plan. Elias and I had never met, lived on opposite sides of the country, and were both traveling a great deal in the month before the ritual. Michael Beer, the Washington-based organizer who had invited me into the project, kept upping his predictions for how many people would be there — from two hundred to five hundred to one or two thousand. I knew we couldn't do a circular, participatory, everybody-dance kind of ritual with a group that size, especially be-

cause many of them would not be Pagans. We needed to create something that people of many different backgrounds and religious traditions could feel comfortable with.

Elias and I communicated by fax and phone. I read the books Alina found in the library, and I meditated, asking the spirits of the dead what they wanted from the ritual. The answer I received was that they wanted to be honored, to be claimed as our beloved dead. Elias, separately, received the same insight.

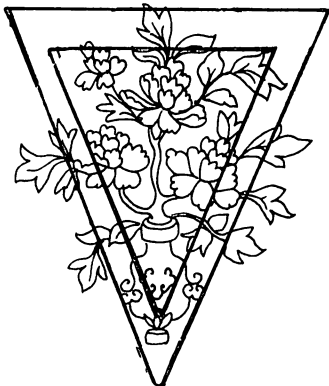
One of the special tragedies for homosexuals victimized by the Nazis was the shame and humiliation they suffered. Many of their families did not write to them in the camps, and the few who survived often found that their relatives and friends refused to take them in after they were released. The U.S. Army condemned others to further incarceration after the war was over, on the grounds that they were criminals who had not served their sentences in a real prison — the camps didn't count. We wanted to focus the ritual on healing shame and celebrating pride.

Just before sunset, on a warm and glowing evening, we gathered in the park across the street from the museum. After a series of speakers, including Klaus Muller, one of the major researchers on this issue, who gave us some of the history of gays in the Holocaust, we began with drumming by a group of African American women. Another

woman stepped forward to sing the prayer sung by Jews on their way to extermination, “Ani Ma’amin” — “I believe in the coming of the Messiah”. Elias welcomed the crowd of about fifteen hundred people. He read the intention of the ritual: “To the living and the dead, we bear witness. We gather in an act of remembrance of all victims of the Holocaust and, in a particular way, of all those whom today we would call lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender people ... Ours is a remembrance rooted in a spirit of solidarity and a spirit of resistance, a resistance that strengthens and empowers us to live and act boldly ...”

I led a grounding. People had been given candles in cups (regrettably, they were styrofoam, the one flaw in the evening, but by the time I fought my way out of the airport and arrived at the ritual site, the deed was done). I asked them to hold the candles up to each of the four directions in turn, as a form of circle casting. Looking down from the low stage, I could see a wave of movement as thousands of flames dipped and swayed, mirroring the setting sun.

Judith Kate Friedman, a San Francisco



musician (who sings on “Demeter’s Song” on the new Reclaiming tape), led a small band of musicians in a “nigun” — a wordless melody - on guitar, clarinet and flute.

Then we began a long litany, written by myself and Alina and read by four voices: Elias, Jack Davis (a Bay Area gay activist, artist, and workshop leader), Alina, and Ken (a friend of Elias). Because the overwhelming majority of gays killed by the Nazis were men, we wrote the litany for a predominance of male voices. We wanted people to feel as if they were literally hearing the words of those who had died:

“I was a university student from Vienna. I was not political.”

“I was a young Jew from Berlin.”

“I was a Gypsy from Hungary, who had crossed many borders.”

“I was a doctor.”

“I was a laborer ...”

The litany expressed the painful experience of those who suffered in the camps, where the men in the pink triangles were given the worst jobs, the worst conditions, were chosen for horrifying medical experiments, and marked for extermination.

“I pushed a cart uphill in the clay pit, day after day, until I dropped from exhaustion and the wheels crushed me to death ...”

“I was a sixteen year old Polish boy, forced to give sexual service to the guards ...”

“I was a prostitute in the camp brothel. The men in the pink triangles were forced to rape me as part of their ‘cure,’ while

the S.S. watched ...”

“I was tied to the whipping block they called the horse, bent over, my hands tied to my ankles, my buttocks exposed. They beat me with a horsewhip, while I screamed and bled ...”

“I volunteered to be castrated, because they said I could go free. But they sent me to the front lines where I was killed under fire.”

But we also wanted to move toward hope:

“As I lay dying after the beating, I had a vision. I saw thousands and thousands of us marching, filling the streets, singing for joy ...”

“And the pink triangle, our badge of shame, had become a banner of our pride.”

“And my brothers and sisters embraced me, and welcomed me home ...”

We ended with a call and response chant, written and led by Elias:

*“Yes, we honor you, our sisters and
brothers
Yes, we will remember and recognize
you who have gone before us
Without you, we would not exist here
today
And through us, you live on from
generation to generation,
From Everlasting to Everlasting
And so we commit ourselves to a spirit
of resistance and life.
We raise our light, our lives, our
hope, our love
And we say boldly and without fear:
Never again!”*

As we lifted our candles, Judith Kate led us in a chant made from part of the melody she'd played earlier:

*“Let love arise in us,
Let love arise in us,
Let love arise in us,
And the circle be made whole.”*

The energy rose with the voices of the crowd, and I felt spirits around us, grieving for the suffering, but rejoicing in being acknowledged, remembered, claimed anew as part of the circle. In the background, two cellists played “The Partisan’s Song”, written in honor of the fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

We ended the ritual by moving across the street to create a huge triangle made of pink carnations on the steps of the museum. A large floral wreath in the shape of a pink triangle also appeared, and made the centerpiece of the memorial. In the huge crowd, individuals slowly edged forward to lay their tribute to the dead on the ground. I was moved by the patience of the people, waiting for a long time to perform the simple ritual act of offering, as we were each carried by the slow-moving mass of people, pressed on all sides, to suddenly emerge into the open center full of blossoms. The process seemed to symbolize the emergence of all of us in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and Pagan movements who take what was once a mark of shame and turn it into a symbol of pride in who we are.



STARHAWK'S 1993 SCHEDULE

July 1: Vancouver, British Columbia
"Reclaiming the Sacred" (public ritual)
Contact: Pat Hogan (604) 253-7189

July 2-4: Salt Spring Island, British Columbia
"Mythmaking: Weaving Our Stories into Ritual" - women's weekend
Contact: Gaia Collective (604) 537-9328
PO Box 605, Ganges, BC VOS 1CO

August 13: San Francisco, California
"Rhythm and Ritual" - A public ritual and performance with special guests
Contact: Harmony Network (707) 869-0989

Summer Intensives (which may already be full)

August 1-8: British Columbia Reclaiming Summer Intensive
Contact: (604) 253-7189

August 21-28: Michigan Reclaiming Summer Intensive
Contact: (217) 744-2914



September 10-13: Washington DC
Weekend workshop and talk on EcoFeminism at Smithsonian Institute

September 26: Menlo Park, California
Booksigning, 12:00-1:00 pm and Women's Workshop, 1:00-6:00 pm
Contact: Two Sisters Book Store (415) 323-4778

Starhawk's new novel, *The Fifth Sacred Thing*, is now available at bookstores. Set in the year 2048, it envisions the world we could create.

* * *

For Starhawk's cassette, *The Way to the Well: A Trance Journey for Empowerment*, a beautiful story with songs and drumming, send \$11.50 (includes shipping and handling) to Harmony Network.

To confirm dates, or for more information, contact:
Harmony Network
PO Box 2550, Guerneville, CA 95446
(707) 869-0989

Reclaiming Classes & Events



THE IRON PENTACLE for women, by Carol, Patti, & Rebecca

Using our magical skills, moving and shaping energy, transforming ourselves through trance to explore the five points of our inner pentacle: Sex (primal energy), Self, Passion, Pride (self-esteem), and Power (effectiveness in the worlds). We ask that all applicants be committed to attending all six classes. Prerequisite: Elements of Magic class. Six week class to begin sometime in September. \$60 - \$120 Sliding scale. Call **Rebecca (415) 979-5539**, for location, dates, and registration.

RECLAIMING RECOMMENDS

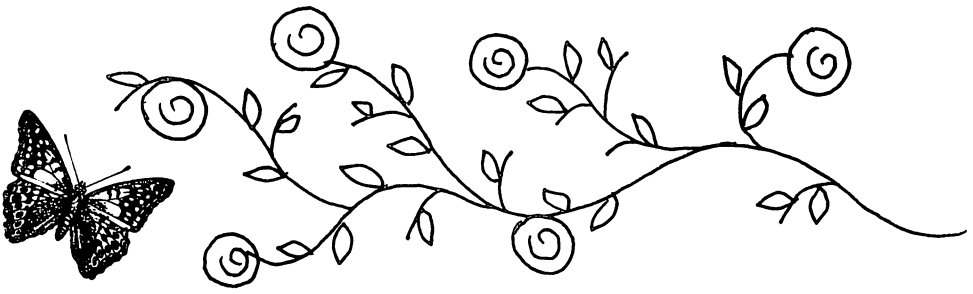
LETTERS HOME - BODY PRISON/BODY LIBERATION - A Workshop for Women with Cyble (a.k.a. Suzette Rochat), Helen Vosters and Ann Rosencranz. July 28-31 (evenings Wednesday-Friday, all day Saturday)

We will go on an inner journey exploring lost, deadened, and imprisoned parts of our female bodies, moving towards reconnection, re-mem-bering and liberation. Drawing on the practices of overtone chanting and writing (Ann), LOMI body work and trance (Cybele) - movement ritual as developed by Anne Halprin - and Rosen body work (Helene), we will move, sound, trance, draw and write together. Each teacher will teach one evening and will facilitate together Saturday. San Francisco location. \$100-\$200 sliding scale. Call **Helene (415) 282-8865** or **Ann (415) 826-5443** for information/registration.

AN EVENING OF RHYTHM AND RITUAL with Mary Ellen Donald, Layne Redmond, and Starhawk, Friday, August 13

Layne Redmond is a frame drummer from New York who specializes in the Middle Eastern tambourine and other traditional women's drums. Mary Ellen Donald is the remarkable woman who has taught most of the collective to drum. Together with Starhawk, they present an evening workshop/ritual, weaving together the tools of magic and rhythm for moving energy. Bring percussion instruments. For more information, contact **Jodi Sager (707) 869-0989**.





WOMEN'S MYSTERIES; THROUGH THE LABRYNTH - A weekend workshop with Vibra, Willow and Cam Shanty

For women who are seeking, facing, or undergoing major changes, this workshop will explore one of the archtypal symbols of transformation - the labrynth. With trance, drumming, laughter, movement and sensory awareness, we will walk the labrynth, finding our way by heading for the center. Among the redwoods, rocks and hills of a secluded retreat in the Santa Cruz mountains, we will seek the paths we share as women and the path we walk alone. **October 1-3, 1993, 7:00 pm Friday to early Sunday afternoon.** Sliding scale and scholarships possible. Meals provided. Call Vibra (510) 237-6207 or Cam (415) 826-4919.

SAMHAIN '93

At this date, Reclaiming is tentatively planning three rituals for Samhain:

Friday, October 29 - A Women's Ritual (location to be determined). Contact Carol (415) 550-0920

Saturday, October 30 - The Multicultural Ritual Group, in alliance with Reclaiming, is planning a full day of events - story telling, unlearning racism, dance, music, cultural and personal sharing, to culminate in an evening ritual, at the Hall of Flowers in Golden Gate Park - a larger venue than the Women's Building. We'll be looking for cultural offerings, facilitators, and other volunteers. People of color especially welcome. Contact Judy (510) 843-0722. (This number may change, so check the Events Line for updates.)

Sunday, October 31 - The Spiral Dance Ritual, Reclaiming's Halloween tradition, will take place at the Hall of Flowers. Contact Leaf (415) 328-4272 to volunteer.

More updates in the Fall Newsletter and on the Events Line.



FASHION IS THE HEALER
by Aurora and Sage

*Where there's style
There is power
Fashion is the healer
Designers crack open the gate
If yer trendy it'll take u thru
But nothing lasts 4-ever
Vogue is the destroyer
The mirrors spin again and again
If yer trendy it'll take you thru
But nothing's gone 4-ever
Berkeley is the renewer
The mirrors spin again and again
If yer trendy it'll take u thru*



(sing it to the tune of "Where There's Fear There is Power")



LUCK

COME SHINE UPON AND BATHE US
IN YOUR RAYED LIGHT,
HORNED HUNTER,
CONSORT,
KING -
GROWN STRONG AND GOLDEN IN
HER TRUST
IN YOUR LIFE-INFUSING BRILLIANCE,
WE DANCE AND SING,
RECOMING ONE WITH THE BOUNTY
OF YOUR UNION!

BLESS US, GREEN ONE OF THE
WANDERING WOODS
STRENGTHEN US, GOLDEN ONE OF
THE FARROWED FIELDS
NOURISH US, INSTILL WITHIN EACH
OF GAEA'S CHILDREN THE
JOYOUS ENERGY
AND
BOUNDLESS LOVE
THAT SHOWERS FROM
YOUR SHIMMERING FACE!

HOLY GROUND

A Litany for Two Voices

by Hilary Valentine

From Holy Ground, a retreat for women survivors of incest and child sexual abuse, with thanks to the Charge of the Goddess

Oh! You who have been hurt, and hurt again, wounded child in a woman's body.

Oh! You who have longed for kindness.

Oh! You who have been lied to and told it was truth. You who saw the truth and were told it was a lie,

Hear me!

Hear me!

Hear the words of the Great Goddess who of old was called Artemis, Astarte, Dione, Melusine, Aphrodite, Ceridwen, Diana, Arionrhod, Brigid, and by many other names,

My law is love unto all beings.

Your eyes have seen that which must not be seen, and your eyes have filled with tears.

And I have filled the earth with beauty, mounting clouds, and springing green, moonrise, raindrop, I have filled your eyes with beauty for my law is love unto all beings.

Your mouth has been filled with bitterness, and you have spat and washed and still not felt clean.

And I have filled the earth with flavors, licorice, strawberry,



basil, mint, I have filled your mouth with wholesome food and clear water, for am I not the great-grandmother of all creatures, and my love is poured out upon the earth.

Your heart has been broken and broken again until it is one big scar.

And I have raised up a living human with a beating heart from a single knucklebone, for with me all healing is possible. My law is love unto all beings, and my love is poured out upon the earth. Your heart has beaten since the moment of your birth. In this I have never failed you.

Your breath has been empty and shallow and joyless.

And I have filled your lungs with air from the moment of your birth. I have never failed you in this, and you have never been alone. For I have been with you from the beginning, and I am that which is attained at the end of desire.

And your body has been unsafe, and you have grown tiny inside it, or huge and scary, or left it entirely.

Feel your body where the gravity pulls you into the floor. Feel me lifting you from below. So it has always been from the moment of your birth. I have never failed you in this, and you have never been alone. For I have been with you from the beginning, and I am that which is attained at the end of desire.



Lord of Dance

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all rights reserved. May be used or performed
for non-commercial purposes only.

1 Round 'n round, it's the dan - cing that has no end.

2 Hear the sound of the river - er and the glen.

3 Ne-ver stops: on a whir-ling win-dy night ride. Lord of dance, flame in-side.

5 Round 'n round, to the pound - ing on the old drum.

6 Chan - ting loud, while he swir - ls near and far.

7 Feel the sound. It's the cour-sing of our own blood. Lord of dance, flam-ing star.

THE BUILDER

I rip a redwood board seeded long before we all were born
I drive in nails drawn from time's deep red pools of liquid iron
For a dance of anxious ghosts I lay this square and level floor
Ghosts whose flowering dreams of flesh the soil below is hungry for

I see rot spread from house to house, from ridge to ridge, and town to town
I feel the steady tug of time so sure to bring these timbers down
And I seem to hear the redwood crying, as I work to hold the line
"The human form is also passing from these structures you enshrine"

I'm fearful that my snarling blade will bite into a bone or vein
I'm careful of the hammer's arc, I try to minimize my pain
And I tell myself that it's alright, that men must have a place to hide
But I still hear the redwood's truth, who I have crucified with iron

Roy King





Letters



Dear Editor:

I am writing in response to Leah Samul's review of Barbara Ardinger's "A Woman's Book of Rituals and Celebrations," reviewed in the Fall 1992 issue.

In the article, Samul compared Ardinger to author Barbara Walker, criticizing Walker for not giving enough credit to Witchcraft. She wrote that after she read Walker's book on women's ritual, she felt "ripped off." She wrote that Walker had "used" Witchcraft "to create rituals so that nervous suburbanites could get to the Goddess without dealing with a scary word."

I find this attitude disturbing.

First of all, the reviewer makes a careless and unfair generalization. Isn't she guilty of the same judgmental prejudice towards suburbanites that society has had towards Witches? I know many women of the Goddess who have moved out of the city to live closer to the earth. And didn't the Wicca tradition begin among country dwellers and peasants?

Secondly, I defend Barbara Walker's decision to avoid the "W" word and other language which may alarm fundamental right-wingers. Certainly not the women who would buy Walker's books - but their spouses,

parents, employers, school officials, etc.

You make a grave mistake when you assume that the rest of the world is like San Francisco, where diversity is an integral part of the culture. In most other parts of the U.S. we are still in danger of persecution. Just last year a businesswoman in Cleveland, Ohio lost a great deal of credibility with her banker because he found out she had consulted an astrologer. (She had been "turned in" by one of her employees.)

To avoid the "W" word in mainstream publications may not only be prudent, it may prove to be a brilliant strategy. To arouse fear and suspicion is to invite resistance. By avoiding trigger words, we can reduce the risk of knee-jerk reactions, and be able to reach a larger audience and teach the concepts of women's spirituality more effectively.

Besides Wicca, women's rituals have borrowed from American Indian, Druidic, and Eastern traditions and our own inventions. Much of what is coming up in ritual work comes from our own deep memories and creativity. As for myself, I am deeply committed to the women's spirituality movement, but I do not call myself a Witch - although I honor and respect

Witchcraft and the women and men who have chosen that path. But it is only one path. There are many paths to the Goddess.

As a movement, I would hope that feminism has matured since the second wave of the '70s. We lost some ground then because feminists were labeled as hostile, militant dykes, and the majority of women got tired of it. The movement did not die, it just lost some steam and went underground. We risk the danger that our enemies will label all women involved in women's spirituality as "Witches" - in the misunderstood definition upheld by most people in our society. The "divide and conquer" strategy worked against us in the '70s. Let's be aware of the pitfalls and mistakes of the past, and not fall

into the same traps.

Many emerging Goddess worshippers are still recovering from the pain and abuse of the 2000 years of patriarchy. We're just getting strong, and are understandably reticent about getting "burnt" again. Let's not judge one another, nor pressure others to come out of the broom closet. Let's allow for diversity and imperfection among ourselves. There is no room and no time for elitism or arguing about semantics.

The concept is what is important. The objective is to effect change in ourselves and in our society. Barbara Walker is a visionary voice towards that end.

Genia Webster



FAREWELL, AKASHA

Reclaiming's beloved friend and collective member, Akasha Madrone, (sometimes known as Pleides), has left San Francisco to travel around the country and look for a new home. We hope she finds it, even though we will greatly miss her. Farewell, Akasha, and all our blessings go with you.

Announcements

BECAUSE I'M CURIOUS ABOUT CIRCLES - a survey

Specifically: How do you cut the circle, cast the circle, make the circle or whatever you call it? What *do* you call it, anyway? Do you use an athame or some other object? What do you "see" when you cast?

The Broader Question: What do you need in a circle? What kind of circle mates do you work best with? All one gender or mixed? How many members make the perfect circle for you? How often does the ideal circle meet? What kind of commitment is involved? (Is it possible to answer that last question?) What is your preferred working style? What kind of magical work is the most satisfying to you? Do you have certain

rules that apply when you're in circle, (i.e. no smoking, no photos, no joking around, etc.) or not? What are other factors/issues involved in circle work (age or experience levels? preferences of other kinds?) I welcome your responses whether you're in the perfect circle, the most imperfect of circles or not in a circle at all.

Will you think about these things and write to Rebecca care of the Newsletter? Please put my name on the envelope to make things easier for She Who Sorts the Mail, OK? If I get interesting responses, I'll write something about this for the Fall newsletter.

Pagan Personals/Pagan Connections

Are you tired of looking for romance in all the wrong places? Do you long for pagan friends and/or pen pals? Would you like to find new circle mates, but haven't figured out how? Then maybe it's time to place a personal ad in the Newsletter. Yes?

Here's how it works. Submit an ad to us before August 2, 1993 and include payment as for any classified ad (\$.20 per word), and we'll put it in the Fall edition of the Newsletter.

Who knows? This might open the door to a brand new love life, a whole new network of friends, and an awesome circle for you. For the rest of us, it should be fun to read, so get creative, be **bold** and send us your pagan personal/pagan connection ad.



Reclaiming Newsletter Distribution

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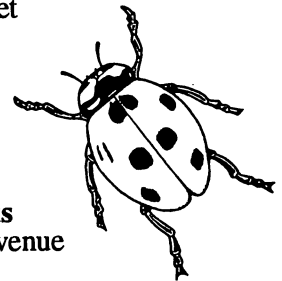
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Rainbow General Store
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Courtyard Cafe
3913 24th Street

SOUTH BAY
Two Sisters Books
605 Cambridge Avenue
Menlo Park

San Jose Books
1231 East Kentwood Street
San Jose



Pagan Personals/Pagan Connections

Share exploration of wilderness: inner and outer. Would like to meet compassionate, mystical, vegetarian male (no smoking, drugs), 33-43, for hiking, maybe more. I am female artist, grad student in transpersonal psychology, 34. Have limited but quality time to share. Let us exchange letters, photos. Write "DDE", 2625 Alcatraz Ave., #345, Berkeley, CA 94705.

Mature woman with two cats seeks to join Pagan household. Can pay \$300-\$350. Any SF location except Mission, Bernal Heights or lower Haight. Call April (415) 864-6423.



FIFTH ANNUAL ELDERFLOWER

WOMENSPIRIT FESTIVAL
AUGUST 19-22 1993

The festival site is in the Mendocino Woodlands, a spacious and private campground four hours north of San Francisco. Primitive cabins will be assigned as part of the registration process. You may also bring a tent to sleep in.

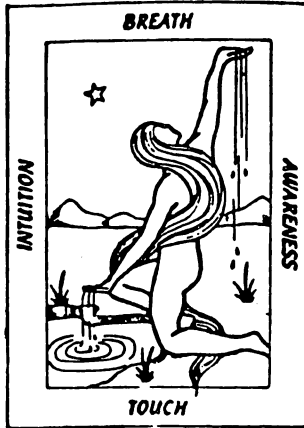
Registration includes vegetarian dinners, prepared by a professional cook. Dinners will be provided Thursday through Saturday. For an additional fee you may order all meals (Thursday dinner through Sunday breakfast). One kitchen and dining hall will be available throughout the festival for campers who wish to prepare their own food. *Meals must be ordered no later than July 31.*

Campfires, plant walks, arts and crafts, natural healing, movement, psychic skills, open air market, discussions, women's rituals, and relaxation. All programs are led by festival participants. Anyone may offer a workshop. Participation in all activities is voluntary.

All women and girls age eleven to seventeen are welcome. Girls younger than fifteen must come with an adult. One section of the camp is a Clean and Sober area. Each registrant is asked to volunteer two hours assisting with the festival. Registration fees \$120-\$165 for women and \$70-\$110 for girls. For more information call 916-558-0607 or write Elderflower, P.O. Box 31627, San Francisco, CA 94131.



LOMI BODYWORK



SUZETTE ROCHAT (a.k.a. CYBELE)
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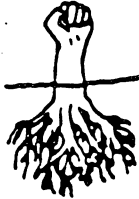
FOR INFORMATION CALL (415) 750-1205

Single session and ongoing work available. Fees are sliding scale.

Francesca Dubie graduated from New College of Ca. where she pursued Shamanic Studies. She has earned the title of 'Master in the Faerie Faith', and is an initiated Kahuna. She is also ordained in the F.O.I. The author of 'HER WINGED SILENCE: A SHAMANS' NOTEBOOK' Ms. Dubie has been featured on National Public Radio, & has just returned from 6 months of teaching Shamanism in England. Francesca has been a Shamanic counselor since 1982.

Clients: "I gained incredible insight & valuable tools for making necessary changes...a testing tugging feeling of adventure...the realization of birth, of being mother to yourself. Francesca, midwife and godmother in my rebirth."

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—Mike Ounderloy, *Factsheet Five*

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Correspondence and creativity exchange for spiritual women (focusing on but not exclusive to Goddess religion). Active since 1984. For information send LSASE to Nan Hawthorne, 540-C NE Northgate Way, Suite 439, Seattle, WA 98125-6175.



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Display Ads	Size & Proportions		
1/8 page	(1-1/4" x 1-3/4")	\$20	Send us your copy camera-ready and properly sized. Also, we can only accept ads mailed with a check or money order.
1/4 page	(2-1/2" x 3-1/2")	\$35	
1/2 page	(5" x 3-1/2")	\$65	
Full page	(5" x 7")	\$120	
<i>Classified, Personal, Type-only Ads: \$.20 per word</i>			

- Display Advertising has a higher value than Classified or Type-only Ads. *When you send art or logo with your ad, we charge Display Rates.*
- Type-only Ads over 2" should be computed at Display Rates.
- Include a contact name and phone, in case we have a question.
- *Please do not send dot-matrix printed ad copy. It doesn't print well.*
- Although we do print some free brief community service announcements, *if you're charging money for an event or service, please include us as a part of your advertising budget for helping make it happen.*

Thank you again for your support of Reclaiming work.

WHOLESALE NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION

We are now set up to distribute the Reclaiming Newsletter to shops outside the San Francisco Bay Area. Please send us your orders before each Solstice and Equinox for that season's issue. Be sure to order enough for the season; we can only ship once per issue.

Shipping Information

For domestic destinations: We pay outgoing shipping costs. For foreign destinations: We request shipping costs to be paid with each order by check *directly convertible to U.S. currency*. Each newsletter weighs approximately 2.5 ounces.

We request sixty percent (60%) of sales receipts, to be paid with your order for the next issue. Unsold issues may be returned at any time within one (1) year for credit. Merchant pays return shipping costs.

Back issues (prior to Fall 1988) are available for \$2.00 per copy wholesale and are not returnable.

Wholesale Newsletter Order Form

Please send _____ copies of **TO:** _____
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 (season) _____

Reclaiming is a collective of San Francisco Bay Area women and men working to unify spirit and politics. Our vision is rooted in the religion and magic of the Goddess - the Immanent Life Force. We see our work as teaching and making magic - the art of empowering ourselves and each other. In our classes, workshops, and public rituals, we train our voices, bodies, energy, intuition, and minds. We use the skills we learn to deepen our strength, both as individuals and as community, to voice our concerns about the world in which we live, and to bring to birth a vision of a new culture.

The RECLAIMING Newsletter now costs \$2.00 if you get it at a store or an event. The Newsletter runs at a deficit, and we're trying to cover a higher percentage of our expenses. Additional contributions are welcome.

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