
Reclaiming Newsletter



Reclaiming Newsletter

Number 41

Winter 1990

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Cover design: C. Moore (and thank you for the lovely bunch of graphics!)

Heartfelt thanks to the following entities for helping to keep our stuff together: Peter Norton & the Utilities, Stanley, the Black Cat Proofreaders, Anne, Cherie, Janette, Jody, Karen, Laura, Macha, Pleiades & Rose.

Printed on Recycled Paper

Witch Camp Now and Then

by Sue Westwind

Five years ago I did something which seemed, for me, rather daring. I got myself to the coast of California to check out other witches at a "Reclaiming Apprenticeship Program." This put the cap on a period of practicing as a solitary—awkwardly, self-consciously, top-secretly—in the Flint Hills of eastern Kansas.

But it hadn't been so very long since I'd lived in parts of that coastal mecca before, wide-eyed Midwesterner slithering among various feminist/political/alternative groups—stifling a longing for home. Finally in the late '70's I cashed it in to go "back to the land." Just before I left, a lover gave me a copy of Anne Kent Rush's *Moon Moon*, which I carted around for years before reading. When finally I did, with only acres of tallgrass, an old farmhouse, and the s k y for company, I had no one to talk to about it, about Her. I don't think I'd have known how to, anyway.

Pretty soon the moon, *The Spiral Dance*, and Circle Network News weren't quite enough. Somehow I wrote to Reclaiming and found out about the Apprenticeship. I was scared to tears when I got on the plane, threw up on a dark roadside a few miles from the site, and arrived just in time for my first group ritual ever. You guessed it—we had to individually sing our names to the group. I thought I'd die.

Five years later it's Wiccan Summer Intensive, but I remember the birth of the name that has stuck: Witch Camp. Five years later and I bless the day I made it home again mostly sane. Five years gone by and at another Witch Camp I think I dreamed even darker this time, got closer to the harrowing core.

Yet in so many ways it was easier. Held in Michigan, a climate and flora that were familiar (yes, there are tress in Kansas), yet pines and blueberries made it feel like a vacation place too. We also laughed a great deal, played at times, and the food was mighty good.

I often say that when I went to the first Witch Camp something inside of me was ready to break apart. I knew it and I let it, and what came out was magic, love, community—then those things crushed and rebirthed over and again. The first Camp made me a Witch who could say so, and to the amazement of us all I found others even in Kansas and Missouri who also claimed the word. This year I came to Camp thinking I was Pretty Hot Shit, and got hung up on a meat-hook instead (to use an ever-popular metaphor). And now I feel stuck with the job of translating the bad news. For in my neck of the prairie, Wicca often has to be all smiles or swashbuckles, lest it become not religion but "therapy". Death-knell which sends 'em on the run.

Some may want damsels and dragons, but it looks like we've got addiction, sexual trauma, bad memories and endless comparisons of ourselves to other people. Or so it seemed at Witch Camp. And it was equally obvious that this is the stuff of real magic. All you urban-anarcho Pagans may take this for granted. Yet some of us in the styx still struggle with how to interface with what I call "fear of magic." We/I question what is to be our relationship to Pagans and Witches who practice our Earth Religion, even shed tears and gnash teeth over the plight of our despoiled Mother, yet will not touch their own "stuff" with a



ten foot pole. Let alone our interpersonal, community “stuff”—and so what good are suspicious, solitary “earth-healers” who cannot heal themselves and each other? For as someone so articulately cried around the fire at Witch Camp when we were doing a political working about the Mid-East situation: it’s all **the same thing**.

The twist is that actually, Witch Camp helps me understand fear of magic a little better. For through the long middle of the week I was often pissed that I was so tearful, so un-together, so frightfully alone. I often wondered if these people knew what they were doing to me, to all of us. Maybe because Reclaiming were the first Witches I’d ever met, I just had to wait and see. Can I really recommend anyone get so depressed as I did, or was I just being weird, self-pitying, ad-

dicted to suffering? So many contacts from all over the world, so much to discuss, and yet I was so mired in my Stuff (capital-letter dimensions now!) it was as if there was a lock on my throat. Was the whole experience truly initiation-transformation, or did radiance finally break through on the last night from relief at the prospect of going home? Fear of magic may be a fine survival tactic indeed. I think I can be a little easier now on those infected with it.

But any way you cut it, there’s nothing like Witch Camp. It’s clear that Reclaiming thought of everything possible to offer support along the bumpy way—affinity groups, Twelve-Step meeting, chakra dial-down, and more. So don’t blame them if it’s scary. You pay your money, you take your chances.

Cosmic Spirals



Blessed Be!

I don’t know what your policy is on printing recipes in your newsletter, but I was positively compelled to share this particular one with you. Dubbed “Cosmic Spirals,” these cookies are a Winter Solstice tradition in my family and have proved to be a great way to honor the grain Goddess.

1 c. shortening
2 c. brown sugar
3 eggs
4 c. flour
1 tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. cinnamon

Cream shortening and sugar. Add eggs, well beaten. Add flour and spices to creamed ingredients. Chill at least 4 hours.

Filling

2 lb. dates, cut fine
1 c. white sugar
1 c. water
1 c. chopped walnuts

Cook filling on low heat until thick and allow to cool. Roll dough ¼” to ½” thick. Spread filling evenly over dough and roll up. Wrap in foil and place in freezer overnight. Slice and bake at 425° for 10–12 minutes.

In Friendship,
Cait Hutnik

Faggot Witch Camp: A Review

Greg Johnson

Equinox found ten Faggot Witches gathered to celebrate the first annual FAGGOT WITCH CAMP. Formed by a group of gay witches in the Midwest, FWC (FAGGOT WITCH CAMP aka Fun With Candles) was a culmination of a year's hard work. FWC was a focussed gathering, specific in its intent, "audience" and format. Because of that, I believe its presence stirred the gay/fairie network.

Gay men's festivals and fairie gatherings have in the past had a rather "anything goes" quality about them—a direct reaction to the patriarchal system that has a choke-hold on our society. FAGGOT WITCH CAMP was created as an alternative—a mid ground between these two extremes. FWC incorporated a number of strong boundaries: no drugs or alcohol, limited size, a specific spiritual focus, specific definition of terms and philosophy, an application process for entry (some accepted, some rejected), and a specific structure, format and process.

Boundary issues are always difficult and FWC's proved no different—that's where a lot of the hard work came in. Planners were challenged to create bold boundaries that included room for spontaneity and group involvement and consensus during the event.

Through that work came a very wonderful event. The four days were intense, emotional, loud, fun, scary, beautiful, hot, sad, ecstatic, informative, challenging. Many rituals were based on a loose framework and theme developed by the FWC planners. Thematically the event revolved around the Fag Witch experience: coming out as gay, body image, coming out as a witch, fag ancestry and history, the Equinox as high holiday, the special sight/insight/gifts of Fags before us and thru us now.

The framework of each ritual varied but usually included basic elements developed by the planners while incorporating new elements, imagery and details reached through consensus by the entire group. This joining brought wonderful ritual with a sense of shared control and surprise. The pre-planning provided a base for intense work. Music both free-form and organized enhanced most rituals as did inspired drumming/percussion and dance. Being Fags, our altars and space decoration changed frequently and played integral parts in ritual-making.

The "successes" of the gathering were manifold. A challenge was met in simply working toward the event, wonderful Fag ritual was created, a specific community was defined, and a new annual event for Faggot Witches was created. Thanks to all that were involved in making FWC happen.

FOR INFO on FWC II, write to:

FWC

PO BOX 45107

KMCO 64111.



One Witch's Season

Rose May Dance

October 20. I frantically gather my pictures of ancestors, skulls, bones, autumn leaves, make altars in time for Anarchist Coffee House in my home. Dead anarchists reading poetry and blowing saxophones.

October 21-23. Round up as many junkies as possible in the Tenderloin, test their blood for HIV, interview them about their risk behavior, hear their stories, tell them about bleach, condoms, and needle exchange. The dead are shooting dope.

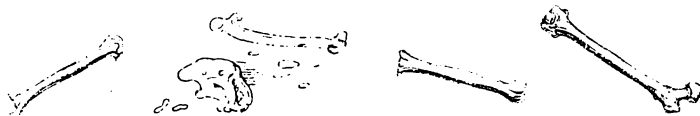
October 25-28. Tacoma, Washington, North American Needle Exchange Conference. We put our heads together about how to cheat the Plague. Watch mortality statistics play in a lantern show on the wall, dance for life to the blues. An old street warrior takes the mike: "Your customers love you very much." The dead are dancing.

October 28. Attend Reclaiming Samhain ritual "Building Our Vision of the Future". I call in the Dead. I sail in trance to Tier na Nog where I see my dear ones. My ancestors promise to help me. The dead greet me with open arms.

October 29. Visit a 90-year-old woman friend who lives in a museum of happy ghosts at the foot of Twin Peaks. As she talks, the apartment buildings on the hill disappear, her home once again becomes a farm house on a dairy ranch, dead cows come home to be milked by dead ranchers.

October 30. I visit "Rooms for the Dead" at Mission Cultural Center, buy Bread of the Dead at La Victoria, fill my room with marigolds. The dead love living in the Mission.

October 31. Needle Exchange night. We have a jack-o-lantern, costumes, give candy to our customers. The line for needles has never seemed so long—steady for 55 minutes, a little break, then steady again. Later I realize this is because the dead have joined the line.



Driving home we pass through Civic Center, to view the Larry Lea spectacle. Dead SWAT team, dead Christians, dead activists, all happy in their work.

I arrive at my circle and we drop like leaves from a tree into trance. Mid-trance I look up without realizing my eyes are open. I see us all, sitting in our rockers, clothed, but with no meat on our bones. The dead are at seance.

Back home, the candle in the pumpkin sputters and talks all night, and the windows rattle. The dead are wakeful.

November 2. Dia de los Muertos. Shawnee, Pandora and Carol's cat—really their dead friend's cat, becomes another dead cat. I buy marigolds and leave them on their doorstep. I dress in black and join hundreds on the street. Muertos march through the Mission, singing, dancing, miming. The dead on parade. We come home to moon bathe in the garden. The dead offer us a beer.

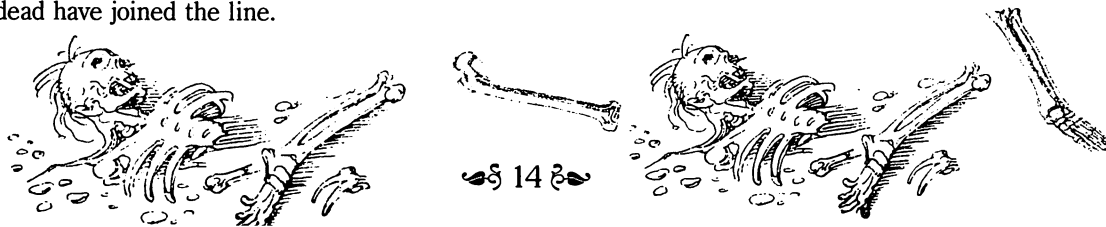
November 3. the Regional Doll Show. The dead are inhabiting the thousands of dolls again. I bring home an ancestor.

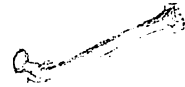
In the evening at Bloodrose's Faery Samhain we work with our fear of AIDS. The dead-from-AIDS are mightily invoked. We dance for them. The dead are living with AIDS.

November 4. My household prepares a feast for our ancestors. I call my mother with questions about our dead, so I can tell stories. She tells me of Evelyne Dance Dance (married to her first cousin), daughter of Fannie Dance. Dining and dancing with dead Dances.

November 6. Pleiades's dog Saba passes through. Dead dogs asking to go out.

November 7. Prevention Point Needle Exchange's second birthday. The Health Department, as usual, does not show up. The dead write letters to the Mayor.

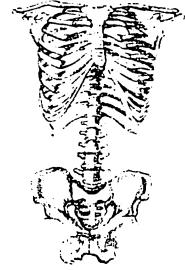
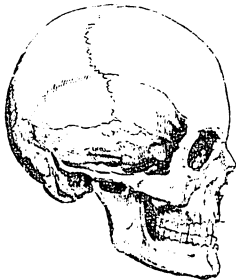




November 9. Sick, sick, sick in bed, my gastrointestinal tract protests a virus. The dead bring flowers and ginger ale.

November 10. Wobbly, nauseous, I rise from my bed to ride to the Pet Cemetery with Pandora, Carol, and Pleiades to inter the cat. We wander among the tombs, enchanted by this most

pagan of graveyards, admiring the toys left on the graves. Engraved on the stones is a joyous litany of names: Spike, Bunny, Mama's Little Poof, Buddy, Yin Yin, Prince. We weep. We laugh. We drive away. This is the end of Samhain. The dead slip back through the crack. The year slips deeper into the dark.



*The magician plays magician
in the circle of his soul
casting spells through the spirit wall
at his unformed heart within
where love howls with hurricane force
breaking down what will not bend
maiming all that will not yield
healing wounds that cannot heal*

*From the well-worn maze through his garden of fear
he leaps into the velvet night
where joy strikes like lightning from the stars
burning all that clings to form*

*Formless, he sails the waters of creation
as an effervescent sphere of sight
moved by the force that forms all worlds
on rolling waves of silver light*

*A spirit flame is lit within his mind
spirit strength is born into his heart*

*Awakened, ablaze
mortality shed like snakeskin
he turns back to this world of tortured dream
to mend the shattered strands of hope
left severed by his father's wars*

*He comes home to a falling house
to play upon a burning stage
the secret pattern of the role
imprinted in the swelling circle of his soul*



Roy King

Fundamentalists Gather for Halloween?

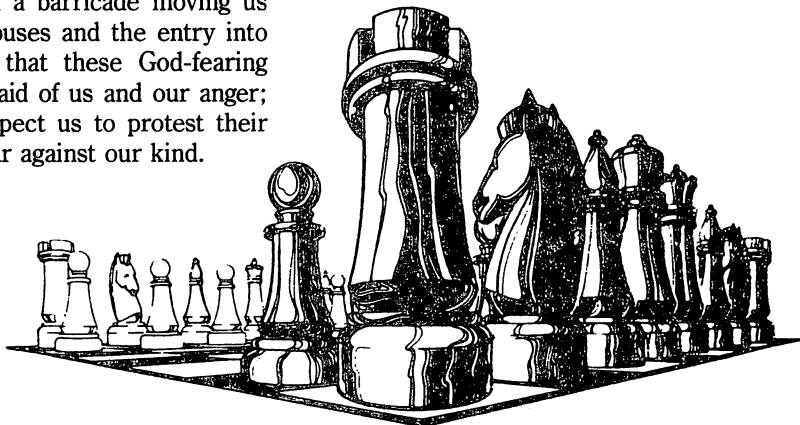
by Jody

It happened on Samhain—that night sacred to both pagans and San Francisco queers. For it was on this night that Texas televangelist and fundamentalist Larry Lea and his “prayer army” descended on San Francisco to launch a “spiritual warfare” on “homosexuality and demonworship” and the “evil of witches, peace activists and sexual perverts” of San Francisco. They gathered at the Civic Center, some reported 6000 of them, but they did not gather without opposition. A large coalition of pagans, queers, artists and activists (and of course those of us who fall into several of these categories) showed up to greet the fundamentalists and send them a message of strong resistance toward their sermons of hate and intolerance.

We came with signs, drums, sage, whistles, stickers and our voices. We were loud, even confrontational, but overall nonviolent. Many came in costume (Jesus was quite the popular character this year—so much for my being original) and several circles conducted ritual in the grove across from the “prayer breakthrough.” There was not a threat of violence to the arriving fundamentalists. However, there was a definite show of our anger—an anger toward their direct condemnation of who we are and our rights to be pagan, queer, maintain reproductive control over our bodies, and express ourselves freely. At one point, the police formed a barricade moving us away from the arriving buses and the entry into Civic Center. It seems that these God-fearing fundamentalists were afraid of us and our anger; perhaps they did not expect us to protest their leader’s declaration of war against our kind.

Some condemned our protest—members of the media, some members of the queer and pagan communities. But such a declaration of warfare by a man who mixes military symbols with religion and justifies the killing of communists and other enemies of God is not to be taken lightly. SFPD, fearing violence and an increase of queer bashings that night, rejected Lea’s application to march on the Castro after the “breakthrough”, threatening mass arrest if they attempted to do so anyway.

As queers trying to make the streets safe for our brothers and sisters to walk without the fear of bashings and/or rape, as pagans fighting for our rights to worship the old gods and goddesses, as artists fighting for free expression without censorship, and as activists working for peace, social and environmental justice and reproductive rights, we *must* show active and of course nonviolent resistance to the Larry Leas and others of his kind. We must show intolerance to messages of hate and violence toward those who are different. We cannot stand idly by hoping that he and his kind will just leave us alone and go away. The Inquisition is over but we cannot let it be revived.





RECLAIMING



GLAS

ELEMENTS OF MAGIC FOR WOMEN AND MEN by Rose May Dance and Geoff Yippee!

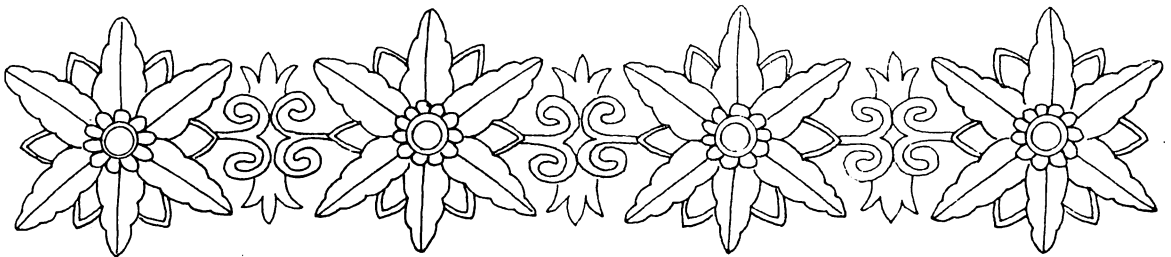
With the art of magic, we deepen our vision and focus our will, empowering ourselves to act in the world. In this class we begin the practice of Magic, Witchcraft, and Goddess spirituality by working with the Elements of Magic: Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Spirit. Techniques include: visualization, sensing and projecting energy, chanting, trance, creating magical space, spellcraft, and structuring rituals. Group experience follows feminist consensus process. Half of the class (at least) will be composed of women students. 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 **Monday** evenings, starting **January 7, 1991** in the San Francisco Mission District. Call Rose at 821-3336 or Geoff at 386-5386 for information, registration, and location.

RITES OF PASSAGE FOR WOMEN by Carol and Cybele

The rites of Passage focuses on dreams, myths and language, using traditional and nontraditional tales and techniques to create a personal rite of passage. Through storytelling, trance, release work and dreams we receive our challenge(s), meet our helpers, work through our blocks and emerge renewed, reborn. This class culminates with a ritual created by the students. Prerequisites: Elements of Magic or equivalent experience/study. Six **Wednesdays**: starting **January 30**. Call Carol 641-5836 for registration and location. \$60-\$120 sliding scale.

ELEMENTS OF MAGIC FOR WOMEN AND MEN (Marin) by Pleiades and Suzanne

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 6-week course, six **Mondays**, starting **January 21**. \$60-\$120 sliding scale. Call Suzanne at 389-1008, or Pleiades at 922-1382 for information, registration, and location.



SES AND VENTS

HEALING FROM ABORTION: a weekend workshop with Spectra and Vibra

An experiential workshop for women who have had one or more abortions. As feminists and Pagans, we believe that abortion is a responsible exercise of the sacred power of choice. Many women, however, need to heal from the physical, emotional and spiritual consequences of their abortion experiences. We will use feminist process and Wiccan practices to heal ourselves. **March 9 & 10 from 9:00 a.m. Saturday through 1:00 p.m. Sunday. East Bay.** No fee. (\$5-10 materials charge.) Childcare problems? Call us. Overnight accommodation possible. Call Julia or Spectra at 648-6089 or Vibra at 237-6207 voice/TTY.

SPELLCRAFT FOR WOMEN AND MEN by Pleiades and Jody

This is a class about ritual, spells and crafting. Weaving elements, planets, tools, sidhe and familiars, seasons and phases of the moon into our daily magic. For information call Pleiades at 922-1382 or Jody at 282-2161.

MOVING BETWEEN THE WORLDS Exploring Dance ritual with Beverly, Suzanne and Rick Dragonstongue

In this class we will focus on accepting our bodies and empowering them to create physical ritual that is specifically ours. Movement experience welcome but certainly not necessary. Techniques include: creating sacred space, circle improvisation, chanting/sound work, tantric trance dance, and animal work. Prerequisites: Elements of Magic or instructor's approval. Six Thursdays beginning January 10. \$60-\$120 sliding scale. For information call Beverly at 381-8765.

RECLAIMING RECOMMENDS

Breath and Body Class for Women Survivors of Incest and Abuse by Cybele (a.k.a. Suzette Rochat) Work in sacred space with other survivors to reclaim your body as a place of power and pleasure through grounding, conscious movement and breathwork. Class is open to any woman survivor interested in using ritual and having a bodily, spiritual focus in her healing process. Ongoing support (therapy, bodywork and/or 12-step program) is strongly suggested during this class. **Ten Tuesdays** starting **January 23**. \$120-\$240 sliding scale. Evening class offered. Call Cybele, 648-3908, for info/registration.

Starhawk's 1990 Fall Schedule

For more information contact HARMONY NETWORK, PO Box 2550, Guerneville, CA 95446
(707)869-0909

February 9, 1991: Montreal, CANADA *TENTATIVE
Benefit for THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA
Contact: Donna (514)562-3200

February 15-17, 1991: Watertown, Massachusetts *TENTATIVE
Urban Magic: Ritual for Challenging Times" at Interface Center
Contact: Interface (617)924-1100

March 19-27, 1991: Starhawk and Luisah Teish in Hawaii
2nd annual Spring Equinox Retreat for Women
Contact: Harmony Network (707)869-0989

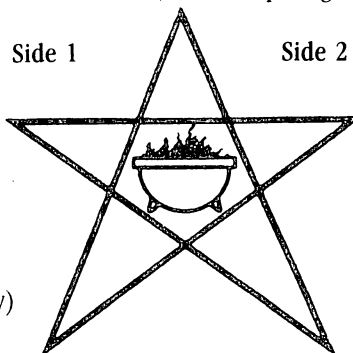
April 12-14, 1991: Colorado Springs, Colorado
Weekend workshop with Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Contact: Cathy Kleinsmith (719)574-9674

☆☆

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: \$10.00 each, includes postage (add \$3.00 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

Hannah's Household Hints



It's rather sobering to realize that, in all the years we've been printing out this newsletter, attempting to help politically aware pagans all over the world to communicate with each other, never have we received so much mail on one issue as we have on the Hannah/Pandora controversy.

This has gone a long way, actually, towards helping me understand the state of world politics at this time.

Anyway, in recognition of the apparent importance of this issue, I have decided to print a typical letter from a real (as far as I can tell) reader. I know many of you are confused about the boundaries of reality in this column, and that this might even be my fault, but really, I did not write this:

Hello Reclaiming!

Your newsletter that I received last time was very good. About that Hannah, though—I'm partly with Pandora and partly with Hannah. In the last issue of the Reclaiming newsletter this guy, "Birute," totally lost me. Not everybody are interested about toys—or Bart Simpson. I think that Hannah is giving us information on how to do things the natural way, the old way, the pagan way. Have we forgotten that many of us witches do not go out and buy drugs for many of our illnesses but use our own remedies? I like Hannah's articles, but why doesn't Hannah write about other things? For instance, like how to make an old-fashioned medieval broom? Or a recipe on how to make your own tea? Or, how ancient Indian tribes made canisters out of dried gourds and how to do it yourself? And what does she mean, that she's catholic "in the true meaning of the word"? She talked about the astral plane. Does she believe in goddesses and gods???

As for Pandora, she's nice and interesting at times, but I don't think that she's giving Hannah much room to talk. Why do they have to work together anyways? I run an ecology newsletter, we just let committee members submit articles or columns every month. Pandora can have her own column entitled, "Pandora's Ways to be Boring." Oh, and by the way, I am 'unot'y a "first-time reader," for your information, Pandora. I have gotten the Reclaiming newsletter for a year now. Also, since you are such a snob, I would like to have my vote switched to "for Hannah," please. Pagan or not, with some more different kinds of helpful information filled with the pagan traditional ways, I feel that Hannah could be more interesting if she tried to be. And besides, I like the picture of the broom at the top of the page.

Sincerely yours, Carina

Willard, Ohio

Carina asked that Hannah be allowed to respond to her letter; of course, since I'm not channelling Hannah, she can't. Nor can I respond to it myself, because—well, just because.

Results of the election next time. I'm winning by a landslide.

Love, Pandora

[Here are more, no kidding, real responses we have received from real readers. We can't promise to print all responses, but urge you to vote before it is TOO LATE—eds.]





C. MOORE '89