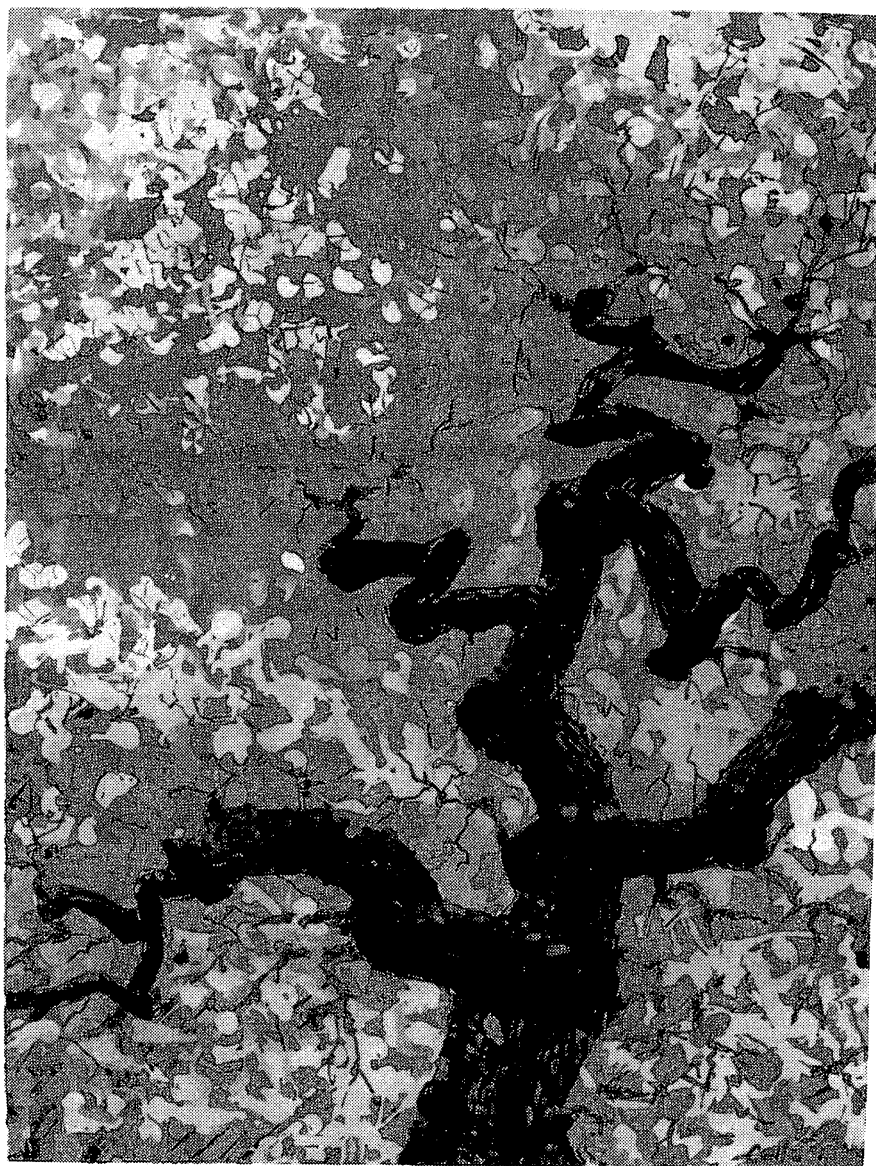


RECLAIMING NEWSLETTER



#59

SUMMER 1995

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

When requesting information from Reclaiming, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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. **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.

SUMMER NEWSLETTER DEADLINE IS AUGUST 1, 1995

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.

N E W Reclaiming Events Line
(415) 929-9249

This recording 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. Please allow plenty of time, and remember to say where we can reach you with questions.

—The New Recording Faerie

Reclaiming Newsletter

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Patti, Julie, David, Robin, Jody and Calla did most of the work this time. Reya did very little, and worried about it less than ever before. It was great.

Printed on Recycled Paper



Men, Feminism & Reclaiming (Part 1)

by Jody Logan

“Feminism is the radical notion that women are people, too.”

A student I know asked a fellow teacher, “Why aren’t there more men involved in Reclaiming?” (i.e. teaching, planning and leading ritual). I have pondered this question for some time. There are some immediate answers, such as that there just aren’t many men putting in the time to plan meetings, collective meetings, cell meetings. But there aren’t a tremendous number of women doing those things either. It’s true that Reclaiming is a Goddess-centered, earth-based spirituality and this is embraced by many women fleeing the patriarchal images and dogma of “traditional” religion (Christianity primarily, as well as Judaism and Islam). But many men have also fled these patriarchal systems to embrace the old ways. So why is there a lack of men involved in the leadership of our community?

I searched for deeper reasons for years before wondering, is it because we are also feminist based? No, it couldn’t be that, I told myself. But I began to remember some of my feelings as a man when I first began coming to Reclaiming events. I sometimes felt excluded because some classes and rituals were for women only. I felt excluded because of what lies between my legs. I couldn’t understand. And though I came to acknowledge that there needed to be women-only space, I still didn’t understand why.

Two years later, I arrived at the Ne-

vada Nuclear Test Site with my affinity group. We had joined an encampment across the highway from the site entrance for a week of nonviolent protest. And though I was part of a queer minority at the camp, I felt comfortable. I felt I was safe here because I assumed that these people were enlightened (for lack of a better term) and free from homophobic, sexist, anti-Semitic and racist attitudes. I was devastated to learn that I was wrong.

On the second or third morning, we were standing in the pre-breakfast circle. Announcements were made for upcoming events, thanks were given, and requests were made for labor shifts. There was a women’s encampment just over the hill. There would be a non-violence training at such and such time. There was going to be a men’s circle that night later, and so on. Then he said, “I hope there aren’t going to be any fruits at the men’s circle ‘cause I ain’t gonna get naked if there’s any fruits around. I don’t want any fruits looking at me.” I started to shake. Tears came to my eyes. I wanted to speak but was afraid to say the only thought which flooded my mind, a simple four-letter word followed by a three-letter word. But I didn’t want to be lectured by some heterosexual pacifist do-gooder telling me that my comment was aggressive and violent. I suppose the truth is more that I feared confrontation and conflict, so I said nothing. I

wanted to leave. I wanted to be around only other queers. I wanted a queer-only camp so that I didn't have to deal with this kind of crap! And suddenly, I understood

I wanted to isolate, surround myself only with people like me. And though I perceived this as potentially unhealthy, I realized that there are reasons why we often like being with others like ourselves. As a queer around other queers, I feel supported, feel that I am not alone in having to put up with jerks. When I was coming out as queer, this support helped me to be proud instead of ashamed. It helped me to find celebra-

tion and power where there had been fear.

In the end, I realized that women's classes and rituals or women-only space wasn't about me (duh!); it wasn't about excluding me, if it was about women! I realized that women-only space was about women supporting women, helping each other to find strength to deal with the jerks. It is about finding pride and celebration and power where there may have been shame and/or fear. And where I, as a man, once felt excluded, I now feel proud—proud to know that others are finding their pride, power and celebrating themselves.

(Part II will appear in the Autumn issue of the newsletter.)



Sickle

Soon comes the Reaper.
At what price is our harvest?
Uncertain yield of hope
Tilled in another time,
A gentler season.
What seeds are left
On cracking ground?
Who mows the bearded grasses
Fragrant in the Summer's sun?

Such heavy fruits remain
To feed those lovers left behind.
Windfall bitter tart
With metal's tang.
The lush to pick so sweet with
Lifetime's ripened flesh.
The scythe is of the cycle.
Weary shoulders ache to burning.
Cut to die.

We never know what
She will take away.

—*T. Thorn Coyle*



Passages

"The Green Season"

by Robin Weaver

The unlikely feeds us. One Friday in the irrepressible month of May, out-of-season showers threatened to drench the weekend. I opened the back door for a breath of air & heard a cry, sharp and trailing and then deadened by the damp sky. The backyards here are under-attended, overgrown. Wonderful fuschias and palms rise from a flowering tangle of blackberry brambles. Above them towers a Norfolk Island pine, like a green and tufted mountain among the roof peaks. Perched on its height was a peregrine, clutching a squab, crying for the briefness of life.

I watched her for awhile as stray breast feathers fell to the ground. She dined with patient indifference as I searched for binoculars, the camera. Finally, her appetite satisfied, she flew toward me, empty clawed, her sharp wings sailing behind her, and then sailed away over the house tops, crying at the lonely sky.

Late in the evening, as I came up the front steps, something glistened in the garden. From under a pale cloud of miniature roses peered a raccoon's shiny eyes. It clambered onto the steps in front of me and up onto the porch. I had a strange sense of encroachment as if a gargoyle had loosened itself from its rainspout perch & come calling on our sleeping house, to take its place among our dreams. It turned to see if I would follow, & when I did it calmly climbed through the porch grill, into the neighbor's scotch broom, & off into the darkness of the city's backyards.

During the night I flee the city, and rain bathes the earth. With morning the clouds scatter but the damp trail of their passage remains on field and forest floor. Water fills the moss-velvet & fern fringed towels that dangle into every swollen stream. The stream sides are gilded with figworts, the oak woods flecked with red columbine. Above these are meadows of deep blue lupines; clovers like scarlet starbursts, dreamy baby blue-eyes. And above them all that mewling cry again, as a peregrine shows its unmistakable swallow-winged silhouette and soars off down the valley.

Get lost in the lushness of May. Wander the bonny paths in choice company, squander your strength, give yourself up to the hour. What seems to drain from the body is really filling up the heart. The more of yourself you abandon, the more of the season's cream you stow away against less gaudy days. Saturate yourself with the finely perfumed air. You'll never wash it out. You'll never regret it.



The sun was drifting down, tucking itself into the hills, but the flowers in the gully only shone with more determination. A deer's skull left thoughtlessly behind by its owner begged to be picked up & then did its job by revealing an iron survey marker beneath. The rusty strands of wire and fallen fence posts nearby kept nothing in particular in or out.

Across the gully a raven came flying through the oaks. They were moss-covered and stunted and newly in leaf and the great bird, without the least dignity, began to climb on one tilted tree by hopping up its trunk. It peered first to one side & then the other, jumped to a second tree & performed the same routine descending. Halfway down it looked over its shoulder with a knowing nod to its audience. Then it hopped & fluttered about from tree to tree through the woods, playing a sort of vertical hopscotch, before flying gamely off toward the sunset, pulling the darkening sky along behind. Nothing on the border is merely what it appears to be.

By tradition the Midsummer Watch is kept with a bonfire. Its fuel, both good wood & rubbish, is gathered from the neighbors with the same insistent beggary that Mummers & other luck visitors use to stock their parties. Build it on the shore, at a crossroads, or on a hilltop. "The bigger, the better," is the rule in damper lands than California. Light it at sunset.

"These were call Bonifiers as well of good amitie amongst neighbours that, being before at controuersie, were there by the labour of others, reconciled, and made of bitter enemies, louing friends, as also for the vertue that a great fire hath to purge the infection of the ayre."

The blaze is the best excuse for every sort of festivity, for music & dancing & *Threading the Needle*, for contests & games, for stories, for playing with the burning brands & flirting with the fires of love. Traditional fare includes “goody”, a bread pudding warmed on the fire, & of course, poteen. Walking three times sunwise around the fire, or leaping through the flames or over the embers brings health & long life, protection from accidents & ailments & the evil eye. The flames are said to strengthen friendships & affection, but also to reveal the future of these relations. The knowing can see in their flickering the truth of the flirt & the thief.

If you can't get to the common fire, make a small one in the yard at home, or better, do both! The home fire may be extinguished when its ritual duties are complete, though the “big” fire might be kept going until midnight or dawn. The smoke from either fire, their glowing embers, & their ashes all preserve your animals & gardens from harm. A torch lit from these flames & carried about the place will serve as well. The cinders, taken indoors, bring luck to the house.



*This is the height of the sun.
This is the year's shortest night.
Lust & death are knotted now,
with love & delight.*

*This is the feast of the sun,
the journey of passion & dream.
Every new life starts
by shedding old skin.*

*This is the dance of the year.
Desire is calling your name.
Dance with your heart open wide
in the heart of the flame.*

Blessed Be.

Reclaiming in Transition

by *Starhawk*

The last year has been one of tremendous growth for Reclaiming. We have expanded from two Witch Camps a year to five. Our last Spiral Dance had between twelve and fifteen hundred participants, and our community also put on a women's ritual, a men's ritual and a multicultural ritual that same weekend. Our rituals for the Wheel of the Year have drawn more people than ever. We taught a Teacher's Track that had more than twenty students, and saw lots of new energy come into our community from the California Witch Camp.

We're happy. We want the Craft to grow, and in particular, we believe in Reclaiming's unique brand of magic, politics, consciousness raising, art and empowerment. But we're also a bit overwhelmed.

For almost fifteen years, Reclaiming has been a volunteer organization. We do get paid for our work—but not much. Not enough for any one person to consider Reclaiming work in the light of a Real Job. We've been a shoestring organization, running on as little money as possible, making few if any financial demands—or even requests—from our larger community.

Considering the type of organization we are, we've done extremely well. We've run in the black for many years now. We've been able to fund scholarships and provide seed money for projects such as our chant tapes. In the last two years, we were able to overcome a decade's worth of flaky ac-

counting and actually convince the IRS that we deserve status as a Religious Organization. We are now officially a church, able to receive tax-deductible donations, and we have received some! As well as at least one major grant, and legal immigrant status for one of our collective members.

(An aside here—isn't it odd that the body that decides if you are a real religion or not should be the IRS? Or is it oddly appropriate for a society that worships money? And in a way, I'd rather have it be the IRS, who don't seem to care what your theology is, only how sound your accounting, than some body able to be manipulated by fundamentalists.)

This year, we've come to realize that we have grown beyond the point where we can effectively be run by volunteers. We need someone to be our administrator, at least half time—and if we could pay this person for a full time position I know we could keep her or him busy. We do need to pay this person a decent wage as we do not believe in exploiting workers even when we are those workers. Especially when we are they! We need some sort of physical location, office space and space for our classes at a minimum—ideally a space large enough for at least our smaller indoor rituals. In short, we need some of the things that other religious organizations take for granted: a building and a church secretary!

Were we to have these things, we

would be able to provide more services to the community. We would be able to have a live person on the other end of the telephone at least occasionally. We could answer the mail! We could do some of the networking people think we do but actually we don't have time to. We could have a permanent altar! A place to keep our books and tapes, other than Patti's basement and my garage! (That may not mean much to you but believe me it means a lot to me and Patti!) A small library and reading room where we could make our expanding collection of Pagan newsletters available for people to read. Space for meetings, gatherings, workshops, classes. Space to store ritual objects, art materials, a child care room. A costume bank, where you might be able to find that special something for invoking the Green Man or a complete orange outfit to wear during Orange Week when your initiation challenges force you to work with the colors of the chakras. And much, much more!

To do this, of course, takes money—a regular income we can count on. We have considered several ways to get this money. Some of my proposals were:

1. Selling indulgences. For a small fee, official Reclaiming trance workers will remove the bad karma of your dead relatives. Or, if you plan to do something karmically inadvisable, we could offer to neutralize the negative effects in advance.

Objections: The Roman Catholic Church tried something real similar and got into trouble with it.

2. Condemning people to death and confiscating their property.

Objections: Same as above, also most of us are against the death penalty. Several collective members felt this option was Not Empowering!

3. Selling little souvenir bottles of Waters of the World at all our rituals.

Objections: Hard to count on a steady income until we produce some officially certified miracles.

After a lot of talk, we decided some form of membership structure might be preferable to any of the above. Most churches and synagogues today support themselves either by charging dues or expecting tithes. We are beginning to develop some form of tiered membership structure, asking people to commit to support the collective. In return, we would continue to provide the services we already offer, and more. Membership might allow access to rituals, use of our facilities once we have some, and other exciting things we're still dreaming up. We are interested in responses from the larger community as we think this out. Help us figure out how to acquire some of the infrastructure we need without becoming institutionalized. Let us know your thoughts, ideas, fears and schemes.

We are also planning a town meeting on Friday, October 6, 1995, so that we can have an open, public discussion of whatever plan we develop. We need community support and feedback, so please do come! Check the Events Line early in September for details. We hope to see you there, so that together we can guide our community through this transition time.

Sister Spirit

I've seen pain echo deep through your smoky waters,
Every ripple reaches me.
And I want to weave you a shelter
From the strands of my heart, to
Keep you safe
Forever.

But, you're wiser than a million years

And I keep forgetting, every wave,
Has made its mark. Every ripple's
Dyed its pattern on the fabric of your heart.
Which knows its way to its own
Haven.

—*Megan James*



A Modest Fund-Raising Proposal, or Why Reclaiming Needs a Mascot

by David Spinner

The economy's collapsing, the non profit sector is taking a pounding, the Republicans have taken out a contract on America, and still Reclaiming faces the need for money. What can we do?

To get a brainstorming session underway, here are a few suggestions:

First, copyright the name "Reclaiming" to make sure no one else uses it for money making purposes. We want to make sure that we are the only ones that do that.

Secondly, as any ad exec will tell you, you've got to have an identifiable product. As Witches, that presents problems, given what is the general public notion of us. However, we could overcome this by finding or making an appropriate mascot to present a non-threatening image. We would be wise to consider focusing our energies on cooking up a palatable image that would make Walt Disney even greener with envy: a being soft and puffy, preferably with big eyes, soft fur, big hair, and of indeterminate sex and species. For example, one such creature might look like a cross between Barney the Dinosaur, Marge Simpson and Newt Gingrich. For now, let us call the mascot Bobo.

We could exploit Bobo's image in many ways. For example, the critter could be licensed to a video game manufacturer. With the proper consultants working with us (to have any credibility in the business world, we must hire

consultants), we could make interactive games that mix and match trance journeys into narratives of video action and adventure. Think of the fun and potential insight available to trancers when they guide little Bobo through the woods to the Baba Yaga's house, equipped with only a magic vacuum cleaner (providing an opportunity to raise money through product placement) and clad only in a fedora.

Other fund raising opportunities would arise from selling other licenses to produce an overstuffed version of Bobo. Hopefully these could be sold at immodest prices on QVC and in Costco and other warehouse stores.

After a short introductory period, Bobo's bloated likeness could appear on the brand-new Reclaiming Visa and Mastercards and we could offer dolls rather than lower interest rates as inducements to sign up.

With the collective's identity and market niche secure, several classes of memberships could then be sold publicly. Special non-hierarchical first, second and third class memberships could be made available for different fees. We could either fudge the differences between the privileges available with the different kinds of memberships or give a greater token to the more generous members. For example, a guaranteed front-row seat on the floor at the Spiral Dance might be nice. Less expensive



memberships would get enrollees newsletter subscriptions, class spaces, Witch Camp reservations, tapes of chants and rituals, books, video games, and all other manner of merchandise otherwise available only on the collective's high-tech, animated, ninety minute infomercials.

Furthermore, what the old peacock was for NBC, Bobo could become for the new Reclaiming Channel. On its own stations, the collective could focus on raising funds for high visible projects such as the construction of a Covenland, a theme park devoted primarily to the true history of the Craft and matrifocal culture, and secondarily, to fund raising on a grand scale. As the admirable and attainable final goal of an annual telethon, the collective could aim to pur-

chase Golden Gate Park or the Presidio. By acquiring either site, no one would ever again need to bother with governmental fees or paperwork and fewer dragons would be needed since rituals would take place on private land.

Until all these programs are set into motion, however, there remains at least one other avenue to explore. As a last resort, as many of as possible could gather and invoke the finger pointing spirit of Guilt by chanting the phrase: "Oh, don't bother raising any money for me. I'll just trance here alone in the dark."

0: The FOOL

they showed me the topographic map,
I forgot

I was hungry for the sun
it was inside and outside of me

bare snow ridges, bare rock
160 feet to tall to the shale talus

this dog's as happy as I am
I am outside the circle

if the sun dies
more suns will grow
from the vines on my
shirt or the flower
in my hand will
create a legion
of mice for us to eat

what I carry in my pouch
is all I need,
the rain & poems

—*john oliver simon*

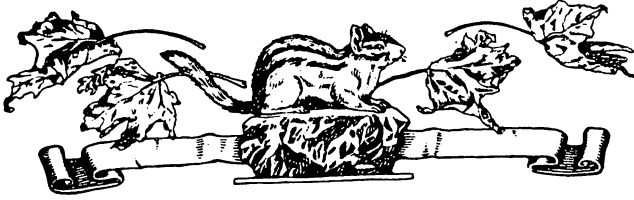


IV: The EMPEROR



if I had absolute knowledge
it would be like this chair,
made of stones & skulls & the wind
blows my robes apart,
made of metal underneath
I thought the mountains were my
friends, I thought I saw them
coming in the morning,
bringing me flesh & fruit & helping
adjust my robes
now the sun's going down I sit here
feeling cold & worried
with a hand grenade in one hand
& a key in the other
which will unlock any door
but there are no
doors out here in the desert & I can't
remember which mystery
it was I was
supposed to have solved

—*john oliver simon*

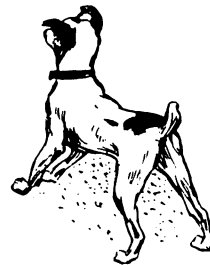
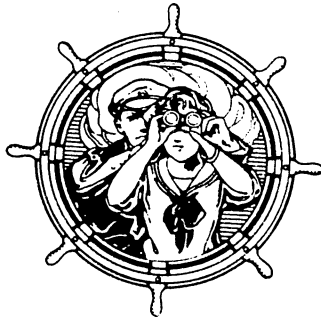


YOU could be in this newsletter.
Seriously.
Have you written a poem or story?
Do you have a spell you'd like to share?
or
have you done any drawings (or doodles)?

Think about it. There's no special magic to being published here.
Just a willingness to communicate.

Have you read a book you liked?
Any feedback about recent rituals or classes?
Read the inside front cover for more details.

P.S. Children's contributions are also welcome!



MYSTERIES OF THE IRON PENTACLE REVEALED

*Carlowe, Amy, Mary Ann, Tammy, Trini, Adrienne, Nancy, Morgan, Helen, and Joan, who sometimes call themselves **the Indigo Girls**, and at other times **the Pentacle Thumpers**, just completed Iron Pentacle class, and have asked the Newsletter to pass along some of the mysteries revealed to them during the course of the class.*

RUNNING PENTACLE ENERGY:

Chanting while running energy from point to point adds depth and leads to a greater understanding of this complicated material, as well as expanding one's intuitive connection with the pentacle. Here is one way to explore this method:

Stand in a circle facing each other, and while chanting, all participants extend the point named into the center of the circle.

You put your Sex point in
You put your Sex point out
You put your Sex point in
And you shake it all about
You do the Hocus-Pocus and
You turn yourself around
That's what it's all about!

(Repeat the verse, substituting, in this order, the points Pride, Self, Power, Passion)

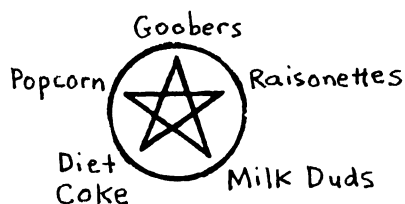
PENTACLE OF BUILDING MATERIALS

(revealed to Joan while she studied for her architecture licensing exam)



PENTACLE OF MOVIE SNACKS

(revealed to Danny who wasn't even in the class)



RECLAIMING



ELEMENTS OF MAGIC for women and men with Beverly and Doug

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 applicants be committed to attending all six classes, which will be held on **Monday** evenings, starting **Sept. 25**. Call **Beverly at (415) 927-2044** for location, information and registration or, during July and August, call **Mary at (510) 232-5913**.

RECLAIMING FALL EQUINOX RETREAT

Share in a weekend of earth-based spirituality and community. Join us as we sing by the fire, walk in the redwoods, soak in the hot tub, laugh, drum, trance, dance, and challenge ourselves to move toward a deeper, more balanced magical life. Spend Friday evening Sept. 22 to Sunday afternoon Sept. 24 among the redwoods of a secluded retreat in the Santa Cruz mountains. Sumptuous vegetarian meals provided. \$300-\$175 sliding scale. Some work exchange available. Call **Beverly and Doug at (415) 927-2044** or, during July and August, call **Mary at (510) 232-5913**. Space is limited so register early!

RECLAIMING RECOMMENDS:

THE USES OF ENCHANTMENT /

RITUAL DRUMMING AND CHANTING with Beverly

Learn and share exciting visceral ways to deepen and energize ritual. If you have a drum bring it, if you don't, borrow one of ours. All levels of experience welcome. Starting **September 9 from 11:30 to 4:30**, this event will take place the **First Saturday of Each Month!** \$25-\$50 Sliding Scale. Call **Beverly at (415) 927-2044** for registration and information or, during July and August, call **Mary at (510) 232-5913**.

THE EVENTS LINE HAS CHANGED. The new number is: (415) 929-9249.

Classes & Events & Witch Camps

WITCH CAMPS 1995

July 23-30: Vancouver, B.C.

Contact: Pat Hogan, PO Box 21510, Vancouver, B.C. Canada V5L 2W5 (604) 253-7189

August 5-12: West Virginia

Contact: Lynn Grosz, Summer Intensive, PO Box 1303, Fairfax, VA 22030-1303, (703) 532-3874

August 23-30: Vermont

Contact: Raven, RR. 1 Box 1753, Charlotte, VT 05445 (802) 425-2984

All camps are taught collectively. Starhawk will teach at all except for the Vancouver camp. Fees vary according to location and accommodations. Some scholarships are available, so apply early.

TOWN MEETING

Reclaiming is in transition—we're now officially a religious organization. The collective is beginning to work on what that means, and what we should do next. We invite you to attend a Town Meeting on Friday, October 6, to discuss the possibilities ahead. Check the events line in late September for time and location, and for more detail about the content of this meeting, see Starhawk's article starting on page 11.

SAMHAIN WEEKEND

In case you're already wondering, you should know that the Samhain Cycle of rituals is scheduled for the last weekend in October. The Spiral Dance will be held on Saturday night, October 28. As usual, we will need a cast of thousands (slight exaggeration) to mount our celebration of the Witches' New Year. If you're interested in volunteering, check the Events Line after Labor Day for details. Tickets will be available by mail order and at local shops no later than late September. We don't have all the details worked out as we go to press, so stay tuned to the Events Line and the Autumn newsletter for information.

“In a sense no Pagan is without children. We are all responsible for the rearing of the next generation.”

—Ceisiwr Serith, *The Pagan Family*

Pagan Parenting Books: the latest crop

by Anne Hill

I am somewhat of a collector, and one of my recent collections is on books having to do with raising Pagan children. There's quite a crop out there, mostly from small presses, and this article reviews six of them. Three specifically address pagan parenting; two talk about children while covering rites of passage through life; and one is about fun tarot stuff to do with both children and adults that deserves mention.

All attempt in some way to answer the question: How can we “develop an organic form of Paganism in our children, one that is as much a part of them as their names, one that will grow when we are no longer here to feed it?” (*The Pagan Family*, pg ix) The main difference between these books is how their outlooks reflect some of the many variations in the Pagan community, and the mainstream communities from which they have sprung. All are conscious of sowing seeds of a culture, as opposed to describing a stable, existing one. This is appropriate, for while we may argue that our adult pagan culture is thriving, we have a long way to go before we can offer that same kind of stability and community to all our children. And none of us can yet describe the pagan culture

our grandchildren's grandchildren will live in, which we hope will grow from what we have begun.

In the realm of books specifically on pagan parenting, there are three recent arrivals that beg comparison: *The Family Wicca Book: The Craft for Parents & Chil'dren* by Ashleen O'Gaea (Llewellyn Publications, 1992), *WiccaCraft for Families*, by Margie McArthur (Phoenix Publishing, 1994), and *The Pagan Family: Handing the Old Ways Down*, by Ceisiwr Serith (Llewellyn, 1994).



In *The Family Wicca Book*, Ashleen O’Gaea and her family figure prominently. She spends a lot of time describing how they educate local area residents (they live in Tucson) about the Craft, while at the same time creating traditions for their family and coven. While she describes some rituals and craft activities they use throughout the year, the strength of this book is in her discussions of being “out” as a pagan family in the urban Southwest, and how that guides their decision-making on some thorny issues.

Her writing has a warrior edge to it that comes of being an activist (though in true Llewellyn style, the book could use some good editing), and exposes some areas of American culture about which there is great disagreement in parenting circles, and certainly within the pagan community. Her family, particularly her 11-year-old son, is shown performing rituals in photos throughout the book. Is O’Gaea being a fearless educator of the public by including these pictures, or is she indulging in a bit of self-promotion that may have difficult consequences for her son as he grows up? Then there’s the issue of TV and video games. O’Gaea writes: “The Goddess’ love is poured forth across the lands, and is manifest even in video games; I think if Wiccan parents listen carefully, they will be able to hear Her voice even in the bleepity-blips.” (pg. 44) I tried imagining some of the many Wiccan parents I know hearing the voice of the Goddess in those damn things, and I just couldn’t. But pagans register all over the map when it comes to interaction with and tolerance for technol-

ogy. The strength of *The Family Wicca Book* is that O’Gaea knows where she and her family stand, and isn’t afraid to admit it.

WiccaCraft for Families presents the lifestyle and traditions of a very different Wiccan family. Margie McArthur and her husband have a large family (four kids!), and lives in the Santa Cruz area. In her household, Witchcraft is integrated into a life which includes natural foods, a minimum of plastic and other man-made materials, alternative healthcare, and extensive, fairly ceremonial magickal workings. She covers the sabbats in great detail, with smaller sections on moon magic and rites of passage. There is a wealth of activities, rituals, recipes, and songs here to use for each sabbat, some of them involving quite a lot of time to set up and create. If you are lucky enough to have the time and energy for celebrating the turning seasons with your children, and making them a focus for your family, you will undoubtedly find inspiration here. One of the ideas I liked best in this book was having children act out the myth of the holiday as a sacred drama—providing, of course, that you and they can figure out which myth to enact, and which version of the myth they will use. Also of great value is an extensive list of resources and suggested readings on all of the topics covered.

She and her husband, and their coven, have created a family tradition of Wicca that feels very warm and cozy, and somewhat insular, removed from the ethical discussions raging in other parts of the pagan community. In particular,

McArthur's inclusion of material from Native American sources needs more acknowledgement than it is given. This book, in contrast to the *Family Wicca Book*, does not concern itself overmuch with the outside world or how our pagan children interact with it. Its strength is the extent to which it describes a viable, vibrant pagan family system, and for best results should be read as such.

The Pagan Family, by Ceisiwr Serith, another Llewellyn release, takes a different approach entirely. Serith, involved with the EarthSpirit Community in Massachusetts, feels that as Wicca is a mystery religion with complex symbols meant to be understood by initiates, it is neither necessary nor appropriate for us to include our children in its coven-based rituals. To the extent that in a living Pagan culture there are several levels of involvement, he suggests that families focus on the plentiful folk traditions, mealtime customs, superstitions, and spirits of the land, home and hearth when working with children. By honoring in our homes the guardians of the threshold and the hearth, by observing small magics in our daily lives, and merely by virtue of the fact that a family lives there, Serith considers a home to be sacred space. He feels that to cast a circle before every ritual there is redundant, and need only be done for rituals which are outside the home or which include non-pagans.

As provocative as these ideas may be to some (and I'm not sure that I agree with them all myself), they are statements characteristic of the book, which is full of new ways to look at things we

may have been doing out of habit more than out of thoughtful consideration. Serith has done his homework on the histories of many customs, and presents his findings, as well as his years of family and community experience, in a wonderful compilation of seasonal and moon rituals, family customs, prayers and graces, and material for rites of passage. I found myself continually appreciating his understanding of how family customs grow and change when we celebrate in community with others.

Of all three books, this is by far the most well written. The rituals are simple, yet their movements and words are full of grace and poetry. His liturgies in particular are moving, and his suggestions for teaching children and working with the spirits all around us are sound and practical. When there are political or gender issues raised by a subject, he deals with them up front, which to a reviewer is like a breath of fresh air across my desk. One minor quibble is with his "traditions to raid" section for each holiday. Though I agree that we can (and do) adapt many folk customs from other cultures in our celebrations, I would prefer that he use a term less evocative of a conquering army, and more in tune with the generally respectful tone of the rest of the book. Overall, this is an excellent resource book for families, as well as anyone looking for an alternative vision of pagan culture.

Daughters of Eve: The Magical Mysteries of Womanhood, by Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki, is carried along by its author's tone, one of a rather proper crone in turn lecturing and instructing



her young charges in the women's mysteries. The book spans the entirety of life, from conception and birth rituals to rituals in preparation for entering nursing homes or terminal care facilities, and I felt that her material on death and dying was some of the strongest in the book.

Each section covering a phase of woman's life is divided into two categories: rituals and pathworkings. The rituals, especially for young children, are short and to the point, focussing on small and large life passages; there is no discussion of Sabbats. The pathworkings are visualizations, attention-building exercises, and meditations. Ashcroft-Nowicki promotes teaching our daughters and sons as young as four how to concentrate, with focussed attention. Though I never had that particular training, nor have I pushed meditation exercises on my children, I think that for many children her method would work

quite nicely. I also agree with her that it is valuable for young children to have that ability, and that the fast pace of TV and media robs our children of the benefits of focussed concentration. The power developed in the pathworkings is used for many purposes: to create a guardian spirit that will be with the child through school, for example, or to ease pain and speed recovery in the case of hospitalization. There is also a lovely description of developing a way to communicate with a recently deceased friend, relative, or pet.

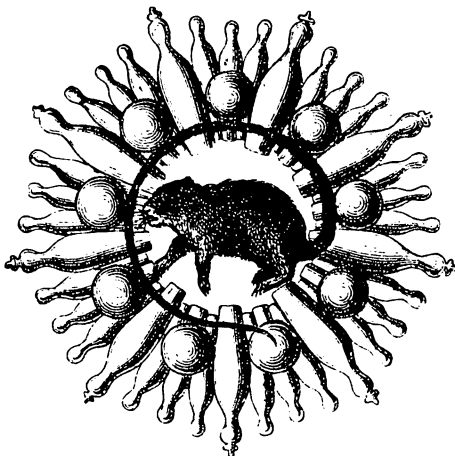
The overall tone and Old School approach to raising daughters also brings up the differences I have with Ashcroft-Nowicki's book. In the first place, the title *Daughters of Eve*, is too biblical for its subject matter. Though this is a Goddess-centered book, and obviously written from that perspective, the author seems to have bought into many of the patriarchal myths of the limits of women's power. It is quite heterosexual-oriented—love, marriage, and commitment are assumed to be with men—and does not go far enough in empowering young women to deal with issues of assault and rape. The young woman is encouraged to submit if there is the slightest fear of life-threatening danger in an attack. While this is good advice as far as it goes, I would have liked to see some mention of the incredible physical resources our daughters (and sons) have for self-defense. As they are busy learning and meditating, growing and changing, they need training in listening to their intuitions and empowering themselves with firm boundaries (saying NO in a strong voice,

and meaning it, is a great power), as well as the ability to protect their psyches from the brunt of an attack and to heal afterwards.

Also, similar to *The Pagan Family*, Ashcroft-Nowicki does not mention working in sacred space. It seems to me that creating a circle is one of the basic magical skills we ought to teach our children. I would not train my daughter to trance without first training her to cast a strong circle around herself, regardless of how many guardian spirits she has conjured. This may be a “different strokes” issue, but again, it points out yet another area of discussion for pagan parents. I would not use much of her material myself without some reworking, but that is the point, isn’t it? If nothing else, this book will help you clarify your thoughts about teaching magical skills to young children.

Modern Rites of Passage: Witchcraft Today Book 2, is the second in a series of four books on the modern Craft movement. It is this volume, however, which may be of greatest interest to pagan parents. Of particular interest are the essay by Karen Charboneau-Harrison on “raising a pagan child,” “Childbirth and Wiccaning” by Patricia Telesco, “Between the Worlds: Late Adolescence and Early Adulthood in Modern Paganism” by Anodea Judith, and “Working with the Underaged Seeker” by Judy Harrow.

The first two are very much introductory essays—because of space limitations the book does not go into great detail—but I found myself nodding in agreement at each of the points of view



presented. “Raising a Pagan Child” deals with the culture clash between Pagan and mainstream Christian values, in terms of the major holidays (Christmas, Halloween and Easter), talking to your children about discretion and silence, and has really good suggestions about beginning magickal training of children.

“Between the Worlds,” Anodea Judith’s interview/article with three young people from the Church of All Worlds land up in Mendocino County is valuable for the perspective it brings not only to growing up pagan, but within an intentional pagan, alternative, rural community. Particularly valuable are their thoughtful insights on where the pagan community can stand improvement or self-reflection, and what they found to rebel against, when they needed to rebel.

Judy Harrow has included two of her excellent articles. “Other People’s Kids: Dealing with the Underage Seeker” should be required reading for parents, young people interested in pursuing a spiritual tradition other than what they were raised in, and those of us who in

our teaching of the Craft encounter students who are legally minors. And “Initiation by Ordeal: Military Service as a Passage into Adulthood” presents a convincing discussion of the ethics and conflicts in the warrior path and the decision to undergo, or forego, military service. Overall, this book is excellent, and I highly recommend it as a must read for witches and pagans of all ages who want a broader understanding of the issues confronting paganism today.

Tarot Games: 45 Playful Ways to Explore Tarot Cards Together wins the award for best graphic design. If you’ve never seen Durga Bernhard’s artwork, feast your eyes on both the cover art here and the smaller designs throughout the text. It is great example of how graphics can enhance the impact of a book. *Tarot Games* is full of ways for small and large circles to use the cards that are different from doing standard readings. The element of complete fun and fantasy in these games is useful, I find, especially in the face of major worries that I am trying to tease the tangles out of. Many could be used effectively by groups before embarking on major processing or decision-making work, to see what the cards have to say in a non-threatening manner.

The authors put together a whole section of games to play with kids, which I have tried with varying success with my own kids. Their favorite was The Wishing Well, where you set up a circle of cards 3 feet across, and each person in turn picks a card (face down) from the edge, stands back, and pitches the card towards the well. If it lands face up

inside, the the card is “read” for whatever meaning comes to you or your child, as a wish coming true. Even with the unstructured nature of the play, though, I found they were still looking to me for “what it means,” rather than coming up with ideas or connections of their own. This might change if I keep at it long enough.

My 7-year-old daughter liked the games more than my 9-year-old son, which probably says as much about their natures as their ages—he demands a higher degree of linear thinking, while she is the dreamy, imaginative sort. My two-year-old daughter was thrilled to be allowed to touch such lovely things, and spent her time collecting our cards and telling us they were hers only. I ended up with a few bent cards, but they all said they wanted to play the game again. Interestingly, though, none of the other books I reviewed talked much about the tarot, or using divinatory tools with children in general. With all the seriousness of some of our rituals, and the adult-centered focus of our community work, it is nice to have something concrete that bridges the gap and doesn’t require a lot of preparation or formality. Check out this book for yourself, your circle and your kid friends, and see if you don’t get a few good ideas from it, and some interesting insights as well.



White “Feminism” and Pagan Men

A response to Steven Hill’s letter on the Men’s Samhain ritual

“You can be certain that some (many? most? all?) of these men have engaged in sexist, abusive and violent behavior in the past and perhaps in the near-present.”—Steven Hill, on the Samhain Men’s ritual, Reclaiming Newsletter, Spring ’95.

I am writing to protest the self-hating, male-hating tone permeating Steven Hill’s letter and contested by neither the editors nor Brook’s response. I have seen this pattern repeatedly in Reclaiming public spaces and it horrifies me. It is an insult to the honor of genuine feminism, not to mention the strength and experiences of the actual survivors it claims to speak for. It is a core element in the Whiteness that keeps me at the periphery and makes a mockery of our attempted “pagan” identity.

My concerns are twofold: one, that our need to be opposed to oppression is resulting in an obsession with victimhood to the extent that we disempower ourselves and return toward the culture-forms we oppose; and two, that our commitment to be absolutely feminist in every detail is resulting in a denial of ethnic, class, and other realities, which not only cripples our ability to relate to other communities, but also injures our ability to form true community for ourselves.

Both Brook and Steven present a picture of the author as victim. I would like to point out that he is behaving as an

assailant, accusing our men of battering, rape, murder and the promotion of such, not to mention the spiritual attack of publicly holding out such a self-image as the “feminist” male ideal. It infuriates me that such an attack would pass unchallenged, that my circlemates are expected to absorb such malignment without complaint, that proud pagan manhood is impossibly expected to incorporate such self-hatred.

It often seems, at Reclaiming community meetings I attend, that not only is any person claiming to be a victim allowed to dominate unchallenged, but it is necessary to become victim-identified in order to speak with any power or invoke change.

White, to me, isn’t a skin color. It is a psychic color—the color of denial, the color of power stolen and truth suppressed. So long as Reclaiming denies its own unique cultural identity, it remains a White group. Not European—White.

I would like to invite Reclaiming to recognize itself as an ethnic group, a distinct subculture, to believe in ourselves enough to know that we are different. Pagans are culturally different than mainstream Americans. Let us honor our visions and our children enough to recognize that.

There is a “feminist” position that any woman should always be believed when accusing any man of abuse, because such an accusation is not sup-

ported, and therefore she is both brave and desperate, and certainly without motivation for a lie. This assumes a culture context where a woman has no power, or is accusing a man with higher status than herself. It erases possible contexts in which she is accusing a member of a class which is enslaved or disenfranchised in relation to her own and denies the existence of our subculture where a woman's word carries equal or greater power than that of a man.

To hold feminism supreme erases the reality of other aspects of oppression. I have heard at least one prominent, respected feminist leader explicitly call for this, calling racism, for example, a "man's issue" invented to distract true "radical" feminists. As a woman of color, I have consistently found that those white women who demonize "men" are completely incapacitated from coping with my racialized existence with anything but denial. The thought that I must perceive them in the same way in which they perceive men is unendurable. I was once literally asked to leave a group of lesbian wimmin because I admitted that I noticed they were white.

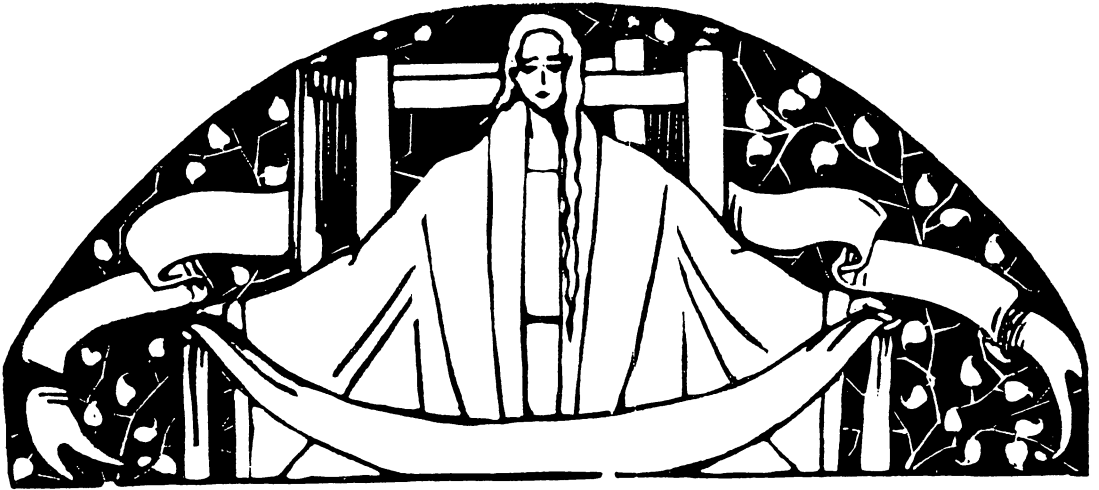
White women in this country have always been afraid of tribal men, and that fear has been encouraged, held up and glorified by self-righteous male "protectors." There is nothing new, feminist, or liberating about slandering pagan men. It has always been so: men perceived as queer or pro-feminine are child abusers or will jump you in the locker room. Men from tribal or dark-skinned cultures are uncivilized heathens with giant, predatory sex organs. The communists want to nationalize the women. Men who are "earthy", work-

ing-class, or in any way tainted with the smell of the vital life force are dangerous, dangerous, dangerous, and in the name of protecting the women, must be controlled, incarcerated, exiled, and lynched.

I would like to ask the Reclaiming community, is it true that our men are assaulting our women and children? What is the extent of the problem in our community? How many men of this community are physically or economically dominating their female partners, circlemates or neighbors? How often does it happen that a woman is assaulted by a man as he returns home from one of our rituals? How many restraining orders were requested this year by a woman against a man of this community? How many women were ridiculed or reprimanded by a male community member when expressing female experience in our public spaces?

How many men in our community were abused or denigrated as children by female perpetrators? By feminist perpetrators? How many were told by mothers or other respected figures that they are inherently bad? How many feel afraid of female accusation and habitually compromise their truth because of it? How many feel that membership in the Reclaiming "community" requires shame and denial of male power?

As a pagan and activist against oppression, I want my men strong. I want my brothers, my lovers, my circlemates, my children and my elders to be strong, loved, trusted unafraid and unashamed. That's who I want at my side. And I will say it: that's what I want for the abusers, too, because I know that it is isola-



tion, trauma and self-hatred that breeds assailants as well as victims. As a sexually targeted exotic girl-child, my survival instincts were honed very sharp. And it is not male pride nor public boasting that I fear, but male shame and isolation. Survival has taught me that rigid feminism is the mark of an abuser, just as any other rigid belief structure.

The aspect of Steven Hill's letter I support most wholeheartedly is the request for more positive male images, including those that acknowledge feminist qualities such as sensitivity and fighting oppression. I would like to challenge men who feel as Steven Hill does to imagine proudly invoking the pagan god as rape fighter and gentle brother. There are many proud and beautiful male images available in pagan literature that deserve more frequent invocations in Reclaiming ritual space.

When men call out questions in the dark, and when men such as Steven Hill find themselves afraid of humans made

in their own male image, I challenge them to consider speaking their own truth, asking "Why do I feel afraid of this circle of men?" rather than trying to speak for abstract categories of people not present.

Steven Hill says he is a stranger to our town. Pagan respect demands that he develop an understanding of the true context of our lives before passing condemnatory judgment.

—Sharon Hwang Colligan

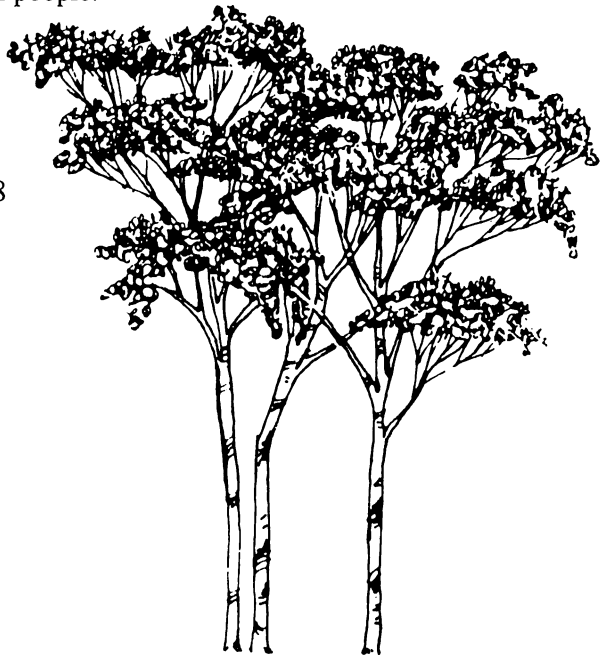


Dear Reclaiming

I am writing this on Earth Day. Yesterday, a group of about 25 loggers, ranchers and religious fundamentalists got together to celebrate "Return to Right Reason Day" on the lawn of the Wallow County Courthouse in Enterprise, Oregon. Several of the guest speakers equated Pagans and people who stand up for the Earth as "Radical Earth First eco-terrorists." The loggers and ranchers are blaming the "Earth Worshipers" and "Tree Huggers" for their hard times. The loggers are also blaming the environmentalists for the closure of two local sawmills that occurred in the past year. It seems that the religious right is looking for some scapegoats to blame their problems on. Here we go again, Nazi Germany revisited. The loggers, ranchers and religious fundamentalists are blaming Pagans for the Endangered Species Act. I would like to see this letter printed in the next Reclaiming newsletter. I am very angry that these bigots would spread lies about Pagans, Wiccans, Druids, Earth worshippers, Tree Huggers and other Green people.

Blessed be,

Willow
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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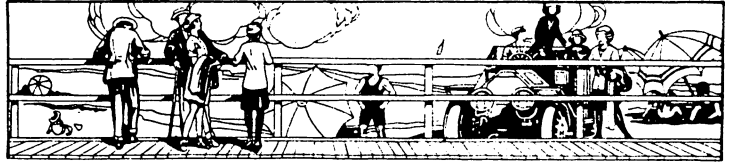
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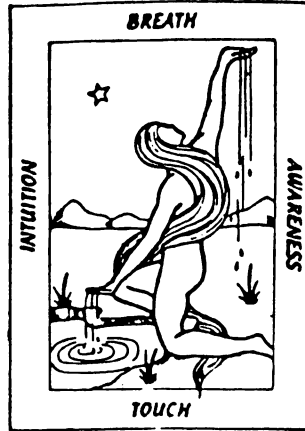
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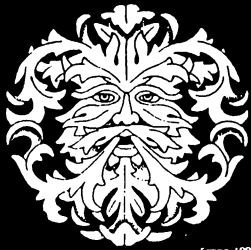
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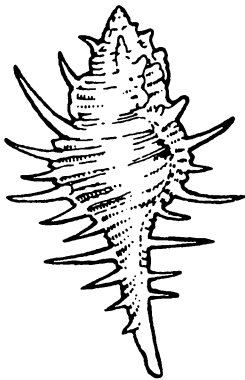


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<i>Classified, Personal, Type-only Ads: \$.20 per word</i>			

- 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:** _____
 the Reclaiming Newsletter, _____
 Issue No. _____, _____
 _____, 19_____

 (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 costs \$2.00 if you get it at a store or an event. Additional contributions are welcome.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: \$6 - \$25 sliding scale for 1 year; \$12 - \$50 for 2 years; \$2 for sample copy by mail. For foreign mailing, please add \$8 per year to cover costs. Free 1 year subscription available for people who cannot afford to pay.

Sliding scale for subscriptions and events: We use a sliding scale to keep costs low for people with minimal income. We hope people with larger incomes will place themselves higher on the scale to help us in this. Please place yourself where you feel comfortable on the scale, or maybe a little higher.

Canadian and foreign subscribers: We would appreciate payment by international money orders in U.S. currency, as it is difficult and costly for us to cash your personal checks or use your personal cash.

Be sure to tell us *how many years* the money you send is supposed to cover (sliding scales for 1 year and 2 years overlap). If you don't say, we will assume any amount up to \$15 is for *one* year.

SUBSCRIPTION FORM
Reclaiming Newsletter

Send to: Reclaiming, P.O. Box 14404, San Francisco, CA 94114.

\$6 - \$25 for one (1) year minimal income, free subscription

\$12 - \$50 for two (2) years _____ additional contribution
(add \$4 U.S./year for Canadian and \$8 U.S./year for foreign mailing)

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

This is a renewal

COMMENTS:

new subscription