

EarthTides Pagan Network News

Samhain 1996

\$1.50

ABOUT THE EARTHTIDES PAGAN NETWORK

The EARTHTIDES PAGAN NETWORK was established in 1989 as a support resource for Maine's Pagan community. This community is diverse, independent and geographically distant. We practice earth-based alternative religions. Most of us worship in existing groups or as solitaries, but feel a need for contact and a shared forum to express opinions and concerns over issues bearing on the Pagan Community in general.

The EPN keeps names, addresses and phone numbers confidential except to other network members. Individuals who are under 18 years of age must submit written parental approval to attend gatherings or study with members. The EPN will aid in establishing contacts between individuals if asked to do so, but accepts no legal responsibility for the results.

This newsletter comes out eight times per year around the Sabbats. Literary, poetic and artistic contributions are welcome as well as letters, articles, book reviews and editorial pieces. Please keep submissions to no more than two pages, typed and double spaced. You may also send your submission in ASCII, MS Word or WordPerfect format on disc or submit it by E-Mail to mugwert@ime.net or wachel@wa2000.winarea.biddeford.com

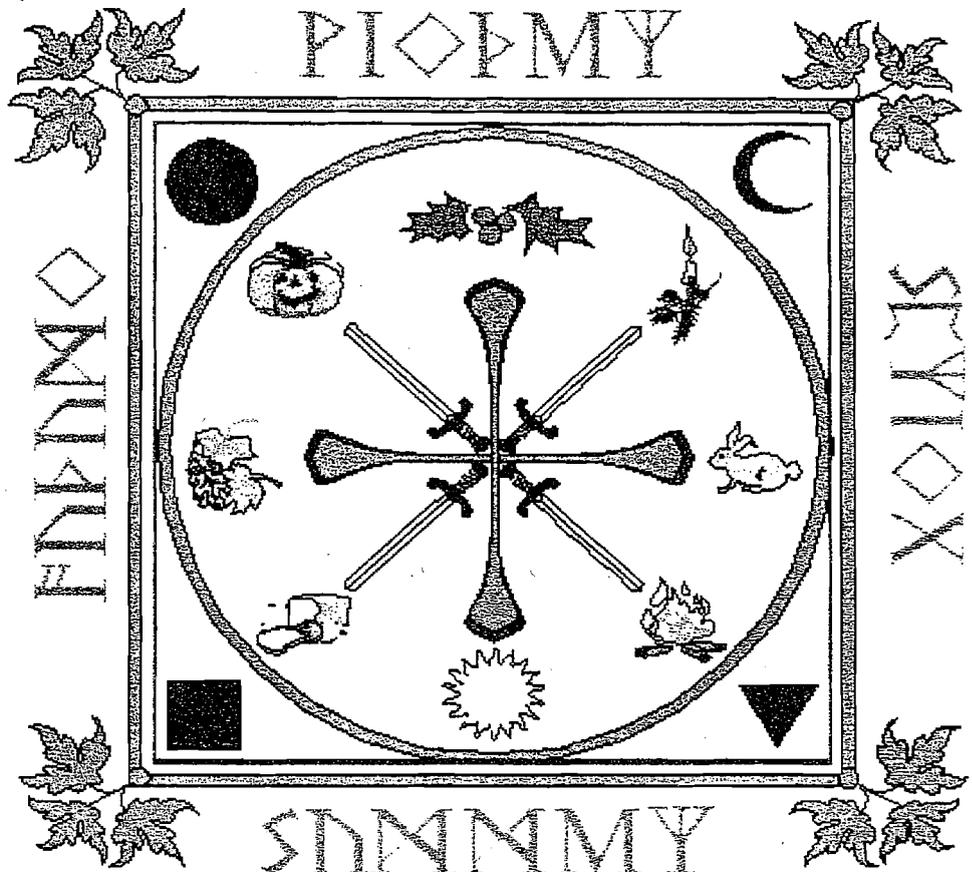
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Subscriptions are available for a suggested donation of \$11.00 US funds per year. Single copies may be obtained by sending a \$1.50 donation and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The next EPNN will come out in December around Yule. We hope to hear from more of you before then.

Blessed Be!

EPNN STAFF

Arwen Evenstar	editor
Harper Meader	editor
Kelt	business manager
Elkwing	production
Mugwort	production



IN THIS ISSUE:

UPCOMING EVENTS	2
EARTHTIDES CONTACTS.....	3
MERRY MEET by Fred Griffith.....	3
HOOFBEAT by Harper Meader	4
THE READER'S FORUM "My Favorite Pagan Book"	4
MEANDERINGS by Arwen Evenstar	5
A SONG by Arwen Evenstar.....	5
DRAGON FLAMES by Kelt	6
DOWSERS GATHER by Kelt	6
IN THE NEWS.....	6
ON THE GARDEN PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT by Elkwing.....	6
READER'S RESPONSE - Reader's Letters.....	7
POETRY by Elkwing, Dianis and Leigh Griffith	8
INTO THE LABYRINTH by Ariadne"	9
MEAGHAN'S SAMHAINE by Kathryn Dyer.....	10

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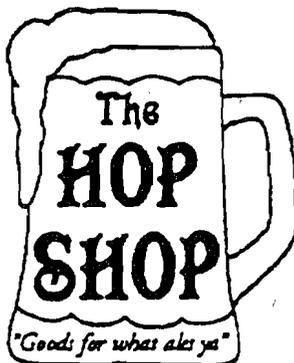
UPCOMING EVENTS



- Oct 27 EarthTides Sunday Night Pagan Study Group in Augusta. Meets each Sunday at 6:30 pm at 283 Water St., 3rd floor. Call 685-3860 for info
- Oct 31 SAMHAIN
- Nov 3 Last Quarter 2:52 am
- Nov 3 EarthTides Augusta Study Group - see above
- Nov 9 Taurid Meteor Shower - Best around midnight
- Nov 10 New Moon 11:17 pm
- Nov 10 EarthTides Augusta Study Group - see above
- Nov 16 Leonid Meteor Shower - Best around 5 am
- Nov 16 Drum Jam & Boogie Bash! At Silo Sat., 730 pm Bring percussion stuff and your feet; plan on dancing! Featuring tapes of "Color Dance Productions". Not exclusive; all adults \$3-5, supervised children \$1. Call 293-2239.
- Nov 16 Dowsers Gathering in Bangor. The group meets the 3rd Saturday of each month. For info Call Gordon Barton 963-5801
- Nov 17 First Quarter 8:10 pm
- Nov 17 EarthTides Augusta Study Group - see above
- Nov 20 Dowsers Gathering in Gardiner. The group meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. For info call: Barbara Foust 582-8615 Topic of Nov 20 meeting will be Labyrinths.
- Nov 24 Full Moon 11:11 pm
- Nov 24 EarthTides Augusta Study Group - see above
- Nov 25-27 Andromedid Meteor Shower - Best around 10 pm

- Dec 1 EarthTides Augusta Study Group - see above
 - Dec 3 Last Quarter 12:07 am
 - Dec 7 Drum Jam & Boogie Bash! At Silo Sat., 730 pm Bring percussion stuff and your feet; plan on dancing! Featuring tapes of "Color Dance Productions". Not exclusive; all adults \$3-5, supervised children \$1. Call 293-2239.
 - Dec 8 EarthTides Augusta Study Group - see above
 - Dec 10 New Moon 11:58 am
 - Dec 13 Gemind Meteor Shower - Best around 2 am
 - Dec 15 EarthTides Augusta Study Group - see above
 - Dec 17 First Quarter 4:31 am
 - Dec 18 Dowsers Gathering in Gardiner. - see above
 - Dec 21 YULE
 - Dec 21 Winter Solstice Celebration! at Silo Sat., 5:00 pm ceremony, 7:00 pm supper. Ritual, song, sacred circle dance, and children's dance combine to honor the darkness and celebrate the return of the light. Potluck supper will follow; bring plate, utensils, etc. \$3-5 adult, \$1 child. Call 293-2239.
 - Dec 21 Dowsers Gathering in Bangor. see above
 - Dec 22 Ursid Meteor Shower - Best around 5 am
 - Dec 22 EarthTides Augusta Study Group - see above
 - Dec 24 Full Moon 3:41 pm
- Also Monthly Dowsers Gathering in Falmouth Contact: Richard McKenzie 797-2513

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- RECIPES • SPELLS
- TAROT • DIVINATION

EARTHTIDES CONTACTS

Augusta Area:

Bill and Johanna Chellis - 685-3860 Pantheists working with the circle, wheel, and labyrinth.

Circle Spiral - Alice Gifford Women's Spirituality Group - 623-7696

Immanent Grove: a fellowship of practicing pagans of all persuasions. All are encouraged to pursue their own world views and personal relationships with the Gods. Contact: Harper or Evenstar, The Immanent Grove, PO Box 233, Readfield, ME 04355.

Jason Gage & Carrie Wheelock - RR #2 Box 470, Randolph, ME 04346

Bangor Area:

Kitty and Jim - 848-2850 We're garden witches; Organic Gardening-arians. We are following the garden path to enlightenment! mugwert@ime.net

Tom Lawrence - 866-3994 CUUPS -Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans, monthly meetings in Bangor.

Clinton Area:

Nemeton Community Center Celtic Spirituality - 426-2964 We are rediscovering and practicing the nature-centered spirituality of the Celtic tribes. We observe and celebrate agrarian festivals, and holy days based on a celestial calendar and lunar cycles.

N. Waterford:

Circle of Trianon - Eclectic Wicca Gene and Judy Hemingway - 583-6519

Jay - Farmington:

Circle of the Jade Tiger - Kerry Phillips 645-9570 (after 5:00) - Goddess-oriented Shamanism, with a definite splash of Green man energy. Simplistic and creative rituals that allow for growth and the understanding of death, change, and personal healing.

Madison Area:

Far Flung Coven - Pantheist Wicca Leigh and Fred Griffith - 696-8565 We focus on seeking the deeper truths shared by all religions, to respect all Gods and Goddesses, and to respect all religious paths.

Portland Area:

Avalon-9 - 885-0424 A Wiccan group incorporating Celtic and other influences with a healthy dose of humor.

House O' The Greenwood - Lorelei - 583-6187 We focus on using our spirituality and Eclectic Wiccan concepts to help us cope with daily life. lolelei@ime.net & <http://users.loa.com/~toyman/customers/tng>

Skowhegan Area:

Dragon of the Mist: Weekly class/study group. Pantheist Wicca with a strong Druidic background. Contact Dragon Mist 9-5, M-Sat., 474-9454, 60 Water St., Skowhegan, ME 04976.

Waterville Area:

Melissa Moon - 873-0528 Eclectic Wicca and Woman's Spirituality - Networking with all in the area on-line: comptutr@maine.com

Bulletin Board: *Circular Logic* - 873-4981 Data line

Merry Meet

SAMHAIN

A few years ago, my father and aunt died together in a car crash. While far from being in their prime, neither were infirm, in pain or in need of release from their bonds to the physical plane. I kept asking myself, "Why did they have to die? Why couldn't they have lived for many more years."

Knowledge of the Wheel of the Year, and of cycles beginning anew helped. Knowing that each of them rested with the Lord of Death, preparing for rebirth also helped. But it did not take away the sense of loss and longing for their physical company.

Most of us have suffered loss; of a job, a home, of innocence, a loved one; and we keep asking why, knowing full well no answer can be truly satisfying. Through the loss, we learn the need for support and caring from others, and to support and care for others. We also learn that physical life is much more fragile than everyday life would have us believe.

If we live each physical life for a specific purpose, what is the purpose for which we were each born into these lifetimes? What contracts have we written with the Gods? What must we do to fulfill the terms of those contracts?

I believe that the search for those purposes, and then striving toward those purposes are the adventures which await us. If we wait too long, the fragility of life can catch up with us and we will have to begin those adventures again from the start.

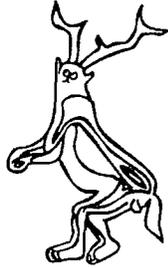
At the close of this year and the start of the new, let us each remember those we have lost and the adventures they had. At the same time, let us look forward to the new year and dedicate ourselves to the adventures which lie ahead.

In the names of the Lord and Lady; Blessed Be.

Fred Griffith

HOOFBEAT

A COLUMN ABOUT MEN'S ISSUES WITHIN
PAGANISM



Several years ago, my father decided that it was time to rebuild the wooden bridge that brings visitors across Bump's Brook to his home. He announced that he would like to get stones for the bridge in lieu of standard gifts for his birthday. The stones that he has gotten somewhat continuously since then have become an odd sort of treasure thrown down by the stream, each one with a tag attached indicating who it came from and telling a little bit about it. One couple gave him a stone that they had always taken camping with them. Several stones came from special mountain-tops. I was living in New York at the time, and I carved my hand-print onto a keystone-shaped rock the size of my head (no comments, please). Shipping a 30 pound rock book rate was fun! He got a large stone that looks like it is giving birth to a smaller one, and many others, each one a story.

This year he took apart the old bridge, excavated ditches for the retaining walls, and has been very busy building a lovely stone and mortar bridge with a four foot high arch, big enough for cement trucks to cross. It is an incredible amount of work. With stories, friends' blessings, and not a little blood and sweat built right into it, it will be a memorable, lasting work of art and craft, as is much of what he has made over the years. My admiration for him grows yearly. (Off the subject a bit, will those who come after you or me say the same? If not, why not? In my quest to become most truly myself, it seems to me a fine idea to aspire to the level of those whom I most admire, even though I am not the same sort of person as them. Will my children say someday, "I admire him"?)

I saw this work in progress this summer because I was going over to clear my house-lot-to-be, which brings me to my point. We will be building a cordwood masonry house on family land, nestled between rugged ledges at the foot of a wooded ridge. Imagine walls made of stacks of firewood (peeled) laid up with masonry, with a roof over it, and a pagan household inside. We hope to have gatherings there, eventually with a sauna and some cool tent-sites. We are planning it to be highly magical, and all work will be done with intention and love of the land. Incidentally, cutting down the trees has not been easy, but as much as possible will be used as firewood, and the bonfire from the branches and softwoods will be burned as a ritual event with apologies and thanks to the spirits of the place.

Would you all keep your eyes out for interesting things to include in the walls of this house? The walls will be sixteen inches thick, so sticks, logs, tools, anything that long or longer can be in the wall. An example is a piece of wood two feet long with a carving or natural shape to protrude inside or outside. A length of wood from your own magical place would be great. Use your imagination! Please include a note explaining what it is about so we can keep track; I'd like to have you visit sometime after the house is built, and show you where your gift is in the wall! You can bring things to the store, send to the EPN address, or catch us at next year's Common Ground Fair.

Blessed Be! / Harper

READER'S FORUM: THE BEST BOOK ON PAGANISM I HAVE FOUND

The Reader's Forum topic for this issue is "The Best Book on Paganism I Have Found ..." The topic for Yule will be "How To Start A Pagan Group". Let us know what YOU think on these topics and explain why! Please share how these views have influenced your life. As always, let us know what topics YOU would like to see discussed. The deadline for submission of your views will be two weeks before the publishing date of the issue. Please send your suggestions for future topics

Some of my best loved books are: *Spiral Dance* (Starhawk), *Moon in Hand* (Eclipse), *Casting the Circle* (Diane Stein), and *Mysteries of the Dark Moon* (Demetra George). Granted these are all women writers, no offense to the men out there, but these ladies evoked strong images and feelings in the way they presented their material.

I have also found wonderful fantasy books presenting Paganism in practice, not just theory. These books include: Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon*, Gael Baudino's *The Strands of Starlight* series, and Mercedes Lackey's *Mage Winds* series. It's a wonderful experience to be taken away into another realm where magic, myth and ritual are not looked upon as being abnormal, and your sanity is not questioned.

Dianis

I recommend *A Manual for Living* by Epictetus published by Harper San Francisco. This small book contains the essentials of the teaching of this Stoic philosopher. Epictetus was a Greek slave in ancient Rome. He was the advisor and teacher of Emperor Marcus Aurelius whose works on Stoicism are also worth studying.

Stoicism is not a philosophy of denial, but one of common sense. It is not about following a laundry list of do's and don'ts, but instead its about bringing our actions and desires into harmony with nature. One is advised to "Learn the will of nature. study it, pay attention to it, and then make it your own". Another of my favorite quotes is "First say to yourself what you would be: then do what you have to do". It about self-mastery. Too many in today's world see themselves as victims and wallow in self pity, a stoic does neither.

Mugwort

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Meanderings

With some help from our own CyberPagans Mugwert and Elkwing, I've been spending some not-so-virtual time discovering on-line mailing lists. One of the newest is a group of pagans from as far away as Australia and Europe who are discussing *The Spiral Dance*, by Starhawk.

After introductions involving about 400 people, we started on Chapter 1, "Witchcraft as Goddess Religion." Well, those of you who have read my column in the past know that one of my buttons lies right about THERE! But I thought to restrain my comments until I saw the lay of the land, so to speak. Perhaps I might come to understand Goddess-oriented paganism by reading what other folks felt about it. After all, that was my purpose in joining the discussion group.

In posting after posting, I read some variant of "Of course we're Goddess-centered. That's perfectly OK as a reaction to thousands of years of patriarchy." The words, of course, differed. Some talked about not being able to trust some old Guy with a beard, after what they had learned about what men are really like. Others just felt more comfortable with a Mother-figure than a Father figure.

Well, I guess I'd have to say that, first of all, one of the Craft's strong points is that it tolerates a wide variety of beliefs and ritual systems. One of those is Goddess-centered practice, of course. My only problem is when any system, including Goddess spirituality, becomes the mainstream, with anything else being just a bit to the left or right of center.

First, the historical argument. Based on that, if we allow the fact that matriarchy is a perfectly acceptable reaction to thousands (about 6,000 actually) of years of patriarchy, then we must also allow that patriarchy is a perfectly acceptable reaction to the 30,000 (or so) years of matriarchy that preceded it. Hmmm....

Second, I have pretty strong objections to reactive, rather than pro-active, spirituality. I would like to think that how I relate to the Gods has more to do with the love and honor I feel toward Them, than it has to do with a few negative life experiences.

Third, let's look at the idea of "comfortable." Who ever said the Gods, or life in general, were supposed to be "comfortable"? Is Wicca, or any other religion, supposed to be warm and fuzzy? Not if we ever want to develop our full potential. Getting just a bit out of our comfort zone is a personal challenge for all of us, and usually the only way we grow.

Well, I posted my opinion, and a funny thing happened. I started getting comments back. "Thank you, thank you, thank you," said one person. Another added, "I feel the same way but just didn't know how to say it so I wouldn't get eggs thrown at me." (I guess this just confirmed my concern about an entrenched mainstream!).

Feeling strongly in favor of working with a particular deity for a particular time of life or for a specific purpose makes

all the sense in the world. It only limits us when we start to forget that life, whether in the material or the non-material world, comes in all sorts of wonderful flavors.

--Arwen Evenstar

A Song

Branch and Bone

I am the wise man; I am the fool;
I am the hunter and I am the kill.
I am the root that shatters stone.
And though I wane, I am with you still.

Of branch and bone I build the world.
With steady fire, I give the moon her light.
With passion proud, I fill your heart.
I am the Lord of nature's might.

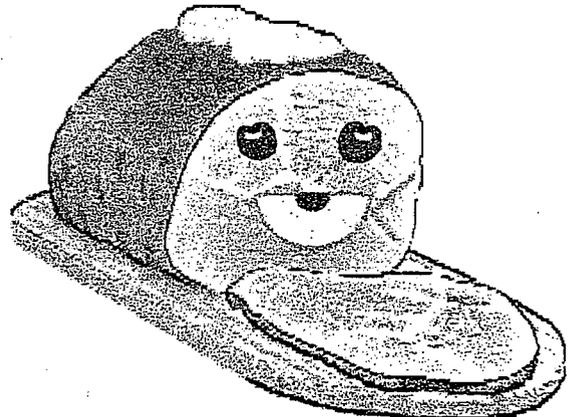
Of standing stones on sacred hill
They built a ring to mark my flight.
With priest and priestess they did dance
To celebrate the Lord of Light!

In forest dark and secret grove,
In antlered dance I take my delight.
With cloven hooves I mark the earth.
With wild song I pierce the night!

I am the wise man; I am the fool;
I am the hunter and I am the kill.
I am the root that shatters stone.
And though I wane, I am with you still.

--Arwen Evenstar

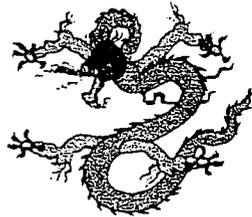
Oh No! Not Merry Meat Again!



Hazards of a Pagan Potluck

DRAGON FLAMES

For everything there is a time.
A time when I finally read *The Celestine Prophecy* by James Redfield.



Ever since it came out, I kept putting it back on bookstore shelves. A few weeks ago, I took it out of the library. I make a point of timing, as I have over the last year started dowsing and studying earth energies, and auras. I discovered that "The CP" is about aura energy. Coincidence?

This book caused great controversy here at Mirkwood. I felt positive about the book and its message, recommended it to my dearly beloved, and left for work. Well! When I returned, EarthMuffin had left me a note in the book: "We need to talk about this book. I think it is NewAge crap."

I certainly agree with her that Redfield has taken liberties, and that his fictional account of the prophecies is little but a vehicle for promotion of his ideas. However, Plants and animals do have a detectable aura, the aura of every life form changes when subjected to the influences of other life forms, - what happens when you talk to your plants? - and we can have a positive effect when we project and focus energy.

Speaking of flames, we just started a Thai Pepper Mead. More later, after it develops.

My flame is fading tonight. Keep yours bright. BB Kelt

Dowsers Gather

Many pagans are dowsers, and many dowsers, pagans. Dowsers like to get together and share, you too can do so.

Northern Maine - meets on 3rd Saturdays each month in Bangor. Contact: Gordon Barton, 963-5801

Southern Maine - meets 12 times a year in Falmouth. Contact: Richard McKenzie 797-2513

Central Maine - meets on 3rd Wednesdays in Gardiner area. Contact: Barbara Foust 582-8615 Next Meeting - 20 November - Topic: Labyrinths.

In The News

Dragon of the Mist celebrates his 1st anniversary in business October 28th to Nov. 2 offering up to 50% off on selected merchandise, and more. Stop by for a spell!

Support Pagan Friendly Businesses

It will soon be that time of the year when we do our Yule shopping. Our advertisers support EarthTides Pagan Network News and so help us all to keep networking. Please support them when doing your shopping



ON THE GARDEN PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

Samhain is approaching, and my most constant refrain is Oh, boy! now I can get some rest. It has been quite a warm fall, especially contrasted with the very cold summer, so a lot of the garden still isn't ready for nap-time. Until the upper growth dies back there's no sense to prune and mulch.

I got the tomato cages and stakes in this week with the rueful thought that having them out was way optimistic. I've never had such a bad year for tomatoes. On the other hand, all of my drying flowers did exceptionally well; go figure.

There's supposed to be a theme for this issue: our favorite Pagan book. I'm sneaking my favorites in here. The first is the Campanielli's *Ancient Ways*. The authors live on a working farm in New Jersey, and have a Pantheistic approach to life. In these pages, you can read about farming now and in the past, and about many of our Pagan traditions that have wound up in the mainstream of society. They have a wonderful appreciation for the Earth and their connection to it. I'd be lost without this book; even now, years after first reading it, I reread each Sabbath's section as that time of year approaches.

My other recommended reading for all gardeners and amateur herbalists is *Wylundt's Book of Incense*. Not only does it show how to make incense loose, stick, and cone, but it is a wonderful resource of all magical properties of plants, herbs, and spices. It has recipes for the mundane (just to smell good) and the magickal-divided into esoteric and ingredients that you probably have in your kitchen.

And a quick insert: Maine herbalist and owner of Blessed Maine Gail Edwards has written a wonderful book called *Opening our Wild Hearts to the Healing Herbs*. I met the lady at the CGF, and bought her book which she graciously signed for me. In keeping with the idea of supporting our local masters, if you have the chance to get this book, I highly recommend it. (editors note: the book is available from Blessed Maine Herb Co., Box 4074, Athens, Me 04912 for \$20 + \$4.00 p&h)

By the time Yule rolls around, I may have lost this glazed-eyed, tired look. By then all the plants should be sleeping, and maybe I'll have time to join them.

Until then, Blessed Be! Remember the Lord of the Harvest, and the God of the Hunt. (Which I suspect means not getting too mad when the deer decide to nibble my apricot tree back to nubbins again!).

- Elkwing



Reader's Response- Reader's Letters

Dear EarthTides:

I have been reading, with some mirth, about the trials of Elkwing's slug infestation. I must side with reader S. Bryant in the Mabon 1996 issue, in as much as I would have a problem stabbing slugs. I have seen beer work as an "antidote" to slugs in gardens, and personally, I would rather drink to death than be skewered. The pan of beer is also on duty 24 hours, where the dutiful gardener cannot be. As for the question of choice, would you rather the slug choose your vegetables, or some lovely, warm, flat iced-dry-lite-millered or budded-red dogged or cold filtered commercial swill? (Homebrew works better, but who wants to share it with slugs? Surely then there would be a karmikumuppance!)

As an outsider, albeit a sympathetic one, I know it is not my place to poke fun, and I realize that some may take offense where none is intended. In my profession, I have to take the individual into consideration; what works for one cannot work for all...but you guys are big on "an harm ye none" as I try to be, but I am a businessman after all. One's dispensation of slugs must, as in all things, be a personal compromise of conscience and convenience. Who will speak for the slug?

Ed McDowell

PS Congratulations to all the winners in the Common Ground Wine and Beer competitions! Great Job!

Mugwort' comment: I advised Elkwing against the beer method because I had found it ineffective when I tried it some years ago. I used Narragansett - a foul sour brew whose only redeeming value was that it was cheap. The slugs never touched it. Reading Ed's letter makes me think that perhaps they wanted a better beer. Hmmm, maybe the little slimeballs are sentient after all!

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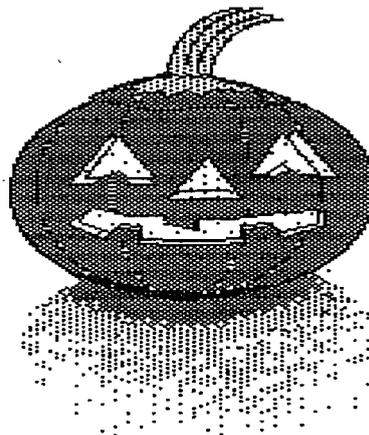
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Poetry

Priestess of Pan

Driving home one mundane day
I caught a glimpse of him just behind a tree.
The bright eyes, just a flash of grin;
Teeth almost the same gleaming shade as the horns
curving back from his forehead.

So young when first we met;
Dancing and, ah, other intimacies, deep in the woods.
The music wild, the mead heady-
almost as intoxicating as the all-encompassing laughter
Welling from his depths.

Too old now for such fantasies
(I almost convince myself that I've forgotten-
The hardness of his hands, the cut of his hooves,
The feel of his furred naval under my teeth.....)
There is nothing left (I assure myself) except the memory
Of the music and of the dance.

Safe in my own car, I sit a moment in the driveway;
I marvel at the sudden quivering in my thighs.
I leap impatiently into the house; my lover turns to greet me
And is taken aback by my smile, the gleam of my teeth
almost matching
The gleam of the horns curving back from His forehead.
And my mortal lover shakes his head, as though to clear it
Of the music that trailed into the room with me.
And opens his arms willingly to me.
He knows he's in for a wild night.

Elkwing

Feminism: On being a Woman

Listen to me, this is the way it should be.
You'd be pretty if you lost some weight.
You'd better not act that way.
You can't wear those clothes!
Whore, dyke, cow!
You're not a lady.
You should obey and submit to him.
Forget your own needs
you have no right to them.
Good girls don't do that
your a bad girl.

But woman am I.
From the beginning of time
I have been the Creatrix
Deep my valleys
and high my mountains.
My terrain is that of Nature,
Gaia Herself.
Moon upon my brow.
Sun within my belly.
I am part of all things.
Giver of life
bringer of death.
The cycles of the moon and Earth
dance within my body.
I am the Goddess
the Great Mother incarnate.

--Dianis

The Dark
Moon is a Crone
Wise, Compassionate, Practical
She sings in our blood to the rhythm
of our hearts
The Lady in the Dark whispers answers
in our dreams, Guiding, Teaching. Unless you
listen carefully with your wholeself you will
not hear Her
She is our invisible twin, our relentless Mother
contemplative Grandmother and ripening egg
She is our strength, our conviction,
wisdom and creativity
She is us

-Leigh Griffith

INTO THE LABYRINTH

Hello folks. I'm back from my half year hiatus. I have figuratively and sometimes literally been in the labyrinth for the past few months. Since I have survived to tell the tale, I can now authoritatively report that it IS true that if you keep on the journey, that you will not get lost, although it may be confusing and puzzling to say the least.

I am now in my second year of grad school and it is exciting, challenging and very rigorous. It seems all I do is write long papers, so there is no excuse for me not getting this column in on time. It is no longer as daunting as it was when I first started writing it a couple of years ago.

Our labyrinth had its third birthday at the time of the fall equinox and its meaning and purpose grows more important to our family and friends with each passing season, and turn of the year wheel. This Samhain will be yet another moment in time when we gather with friends and kinfolk to honor those who are no longer with us, at least in this realm. How can the purpose of the labyrinth help us engage with each other and the spirit world at this time when the veil is so very thin between here and there?

Labyrinths are tools that teach and invite us to descend into the underworld, the unknown. Sometimes we have a choice to avoid new learnings, but more often the Old Ones take us down there, ready or not. Labyrinths are about initiations, and initiation is about death and rebirth. Transformation is what happens to anyone who goes into the dark, the underworld, and returns once more to the light.

When anyone of us descends into the dark for whatever reason, we come face to face with our fears, with our defenses, and with ourselves.

To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.
To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,
and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,
and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.

Wendall Berry

It is imperative that we learn how to "go dark". If this is true, then how do we find our way in and our way out? One answer to that is the labyrinth. Its path is the way, twisting and turning though it may seem. It is the only tool at our disposal, and in actuality the only tool we need. If we just keep on the path, we (like Ariadne and Theseus before us) will be able to not only descend, but learn how to access the ability to return, transformed and changed in some way.

Each time we walk the path, we symbolically descend to the unknown and return to put new awareness to good use. It is always an opportunity to develop new awareness about life, or to contemplate some conflict or emotional pain that eats away at our psyches or relationships.

I am increasingly in awe of the transformation that labyrinths offer. I expect to attain full-fledged cronehood at my next birthday, and the Mother of all Crones, Hecete, is the gatekeeper of labyrinths. Hecete's message to us is "There can be no life without death." We absolutely must recognize our fear of death and learn to embrace it as a necessary and vital part of the whole cycle of life. Death is not our enemy. Death is the ultimate

transformative event for each of us and that is the only guarantee we have in life!

At this Samhain, take the time to contemplate what transformations you have undergone this year. What events have pulled you into a vortex, chewed you up and spit you out in little pieces? What griefs and losses have you undergone, and what new beginnings have resulted from these descents? That is the power of transformation. My dearest crone-y calls those moments "AFGO's". (Another Darn Growth Opportunity). At times it seems as though Hecete and her Cronies have nasty senses of humor. I swear I can hear them cackling with laughter as they pull me back into the dark.

This powerful time of year is a gift to us. It is our opportunity to honor the dark and to honor the Old Ones and the knowledge they offer to us. Speak their names, touch the mementos that they left you, and go into the dark, into the labyrinth. It will take you to places that you have tried your darndest to avoid. Those are the very places of which you most need to learn.

So dear friends, stay the path and pull close to each other as you meet in your circles and sacred groves. Know the dark and respect it. Know and respect the Crone.

Blessed Be. Ariadne



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MEAGHAN'S SAMHAINÉ

Once upon a time there was a little girl named Meagan. Meagan had a mommy and a daddy. Meagan had a big brother named Corwin.

Meagan also had a beautiful black cat named Starweaver. Meagan's mother made her bring Starweaver in every night. It was getting close to Halloween and some people were scared of black cats. Sometimes people who are scared do things they wouldn't do if they weren't so frightened. Meagan made sure that Starweaver came in at night where he would be safe and warm.

Meagan was excited about Halloween. Her parent's always held a big party. People would come in all kinds of costumes and they would play games. Many of them would come and go, leaving to go to other parties to show off their costumes. But there were a few people who stayed. After a certain time Meagan's parents would start cleaning up and making sure that their guests got home safely. The special guest would stay and help. Soon, only Meagan, her family and the special guests were left.

Now Meagan got even more excited. For Meagan and her family Halloween was more than just a time to dress up and play games. It was also Samhaine. Meagan and her family were Pagans and Samhaine was an important holiday for them. It was also their New Year. It celebrated the end of the Summer season and the beginning of the Winter. Tonight, her family and their friends would bid good-bye to the reign of the Lady and bid welcome to Her Consort, who would hold rule over the winter until the Lady came again in the spring at Beltaine.

This was the first year that Meagan was old enough to stay up and watch the rituals. Her parents had been teaching her about many religions so that when she grew up she would make a wise choice about how to worship. She was very excited about being allowed to watch the Samhaine ritual. She had taken a nap in the afternoon so that she would be able to stay awake. Meagan went into her mother's bathroom. Meagan's mother Elizabeth was taking a bath in preparation. Elizabeth got out and put on her special robe. She always wore this robe to rituals. Meagan knew that some covens wore robes and some wore special costumes and some wore everyday clothes and some didn't wear anything at all!

Meagan's mother said, "Are you ready, Meagan? Why don't you take a quick shower and then I have a surprise for you." "What is it?", asked Meagan as she took off her Halloween costume. "You'll see when you're done," said her mother, "now hurry, you don't want to be late!"

Meagan turned on the water and stepped into the shower. And who should jump in with her but Starweaver! "Momma! Meagan cried, "Look! Star wants to go to the ritual too!" Elizabeth laughed with her daughter, "Starweaver is more than welcome to come to the ritual. It wouldn't be the first time for him." Meagan looked at her cat, "Why didn't you tell me Star? You know all about it already!"

She finished her shower and dried off. Meagan's mother held out a beautiful new robe, just Meagan's size. "Oh, Momma! A robe of my very own!", Meagan exclaimed. She felt very happy and proud as she slipped it on. Then

she followed her mother out to the little grove in their backyard. In their backyard was a little circle of trees. In the middle her parents had put up a stone altar. Usually the altar was empty but now there were things on it. Meagan stepped closer to see. Already on the altar were two chalices or cups, a sword, a book, a vessel of water and one of salt, a censor to hold incense and the God and Goddess figures which usually stayed on the little altar in her parent's bedroom. One of her parent's friends was placing a horned helm on the altar. "Would you like to help decorate the Circle?" he asked.

The Circle had already been marked on the ground with a spear. Meagan asked, "What are we putting around the Circle?" Meagan's brother Corwin said, "We are putting autumn flowers, pine-cones and pumpkins." She remembered having seen some pumpkins in the garage earlier and had wondered what they were for. Meagan and Corwin placed the flowers and pine-cones around the Circle. Some of the pumpkins were too heavy for them to lift by themselves so the adults helped put them around too.

Soon the grove was ready. Everyone was wearing a robe. Meagan's mother was wearing a white robe and so was their friend Jeremy. This year Elizabeth and Jeremy had been chosen by the Coven to be Priestess and Priest for the group. Each Coven has different rules about who is in charge of things and what they wear. In the Coven that Meagan's parents belonged to the Priest and Priestess wear white and the others may choose from green, yellow, red or blue. Meagan's robe was green and Corwin's robe was brown just like their father Michael's robe. Michael would tease Meagan and Corwin saying, "I wear brown so that no one can see me in the shadows." He would always smile when he said it.

Some of the Coven members wore beautiful jewelry. Jennifer was wearing a silver circlet and a pentagram necklace. Robert wore a torque, which is a kind of neck decoration, and several rings with funny writing on them. Meagan recognized some of the letters as runes. She was studying runes with her father.

Soon a horn sounded and the ceremony started. Meagan paid close attention. Her favorite part came at the end which was called Cakes and Ale. Everyone ate little cakes and drank mead or juice. They all sat around and talked about the things they were studying and what they would like to learn about later.

Meagan asked about the incense they had used. Jennifer told her that it was made by a Coven member who couldn't be there that night. She said that they would grind together different herbs to make incense that they burned on a special kind of charcoal. Their Coven had a different kind of incense for every kind of ceremony. Meagan remembered that her parent's had special incense for the house too. They would burn it during the day and it made the house smell good.

Sometimes Meagan's friends would ask her why her house always smelled so good. Meagan had to be careful sometimes about what she said to her friends. Her parents had told her that not everyone liked the way that Pagans worship. It was better for her to be careful about what she said until she knew how her friends felt about other

religions. She would not want to make her friends upset or to make them feel bad. Meagan had one friend, Cindy, that she could talk about her religion to. Cindy and her family were Christians but her mother was also an herbalist and didn't mind the things that Cindy learned about at Meagan's house. Meagan's parents would trade herbs with Cindy's mother and Meagan sometimes heard them talking about religion together.

When the ritual was over everyone helped to clean up the grove. Meagan was very happy to have been allowed to stay up. Her mother said that she could come to the next ritual which would be a Full Moon ritual. They would also have a guest who was interested in the Pagan religion.

Some Covens have rules that their rituals cannot be spoken of to those who have not promised to keep them secret. Some of these rules came from the times when Pagans were outlawed or hurt by some Christians. The Coven that Meagan's family belonged to did not have any rules like this but they were still very careful about who they shared their rituals with. Some people are afraid of Pagans and as you know, people who are afraid sometimes do strange things.

Meagan went inside as people were leaving to go home. She took off her robe and got into her nightgown. Elizabeth came to tuck her into bed. "I'll go put your robe in the place we keep ours so it will be ready for the next ceremony. Did you enjoy yourself tonight?" she asked as Meagan snuggled under the blanket. "Oh yes, Momma. It was wonderful. I think I want to be a Pagan when I grow up." murmured Meagan.

Her mother laughed, "Well, now is not the time to decide such an important issue. I think you can wait a few years. You may change your mind later. Sleep tight and dream well little one."

She kissed Meagan good night and turned out her light. Meagan sighed as she thought about the good time she had had at the party and at the ritual. Just then Starweaver decided to jump up on her bed. As Meagan curled up on her side to go to sleep Starweaver nestled into the pillow beside her and began to purr. It had been a good day.

1991 by Kathryn Dyer

