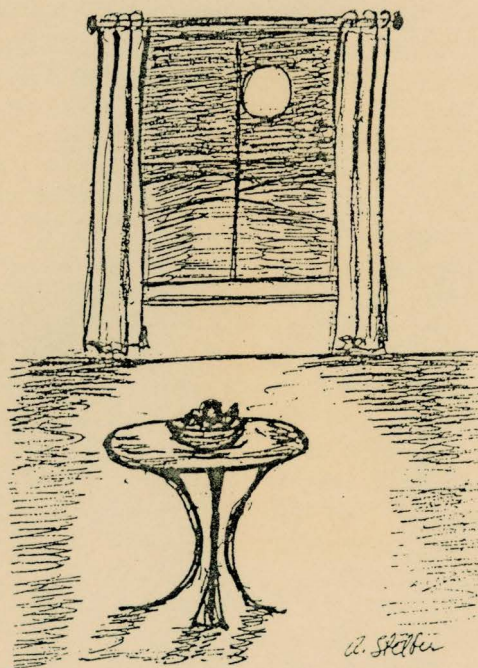


# Sophia

Journal of  
Women & Religion

Volume 2 Issue 3

October Issue



# Sophia:

## JOURNAL OF WOMEN AND RELIGION

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A publication of the Women and Religion Committee of the Central Midwest District/Universalist Unitarian Association

**Editor:** Joanne Fought

**Editorial Board:** CMD W & R Committee: Fran Reynolds, Columbia, MO, Chair; Claudia Dancing, Evanston, IL, Treas; Joanne Fought, Peoria, IL; Melinda Perrin, Hinsdale, IL & Helen Hughes, Park Forest, IL, Summer Gather; Janet Sandretti, Milwaukee, WI, & Marianne Solome, Meadville/Lombard, IL

**Copyright:** 1994 CMD, W & R Committee

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This third issue of the 1994 *W & R Journal* is the last for 1994. The first issue of the 3rd volume for 1995 will be available at WomanSpirit '95 in Evanston, IL.

Again I must apologise that this issue is late. It is the October issue coming out at the end of November. My eldest son, John, who was 42, died of a massive heart attack on September 28, and I was unable to continue working on this *Sophia* until now. As a memorial I have included words I wrote for his service on page 22.

I'd like to say again that this is your *Journal* and was begun with the intention of publishing your creative work. It is good to have had so many responses from the women in our District. I am now receiving more material than I can include, which is a wonderful dilemma.

Our emphasis is on the spiritual aspects of women's lives and we encourage you to explore your spiritual journey and share the rituals, poetry, fiction, art or other aspects that speak to you. Those things that are significant to you may enable others to share an insight that will bring us together in our commonalities rather than our differences.

This issue includes a report of

the Summer Gathering at Camp Ronora and poetry written there, rituals, artwork, Crone's Corner, Starting a Moon Circle, and a description of a Moon Circle after 30 months, a Basic Bibliography on Feminist Theology and Practice, Regeneration, a follow up reading by Naoma Powell, Women of the Fourteenth Moon, and more poetry.

*The Cakes* curriculum has done so much to honor and inspire women's creativity that I know everyone has words or art inside waiting to be expressed. We'd like to see it in *Sophia*, our own CMD Journal.

**We invite your contributions.** Manuscripts must be in typewritten form or computer generated with a laser printer. Art should be in black and white, clear, and easy-to-copy format. I am particularly interested in getting women's art work in black and white that reproduces well. Simple line drawings are especially welcome.

Our operating budget is rather slim and we depend on help from subscriptions. A subscription form is on the inside back cover. Please remember that this *Journal* could not be published without your contributions.

Blessed Be, Joanne Fought



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Cover and other illustrations by Alex Stetler.

The Women & Religion Committee, Central Midwest District of the UUA present:

## ***SING! THE BODIES ELECTRIC***

*The 1995 Womanspirit Winter Conference*  
**A CELEBRATION OF WOMEN & THE EARTH**



*The theme of this conference on the mind/body/Earth/Spirit connection reflects our growing need to reexamine our attitudes about ourselves and our relationship with the Earth. It will involve workshops on the latest in physical exercise, nutrition, ecology, meditation techniques, wellness training, art therapy, and massage, as well as show us how our attitudes were formed, the effect of our beliefs on society, our planet, and ourselves, and what we can do to create a transformative new vision.*

Keynote Speaker:

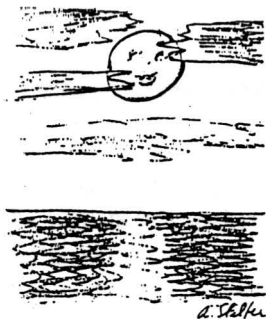
***Charlene Spretnak***

*Author of The Politics of Feminist Spirituality, States of Grace, Lost Goddesses of Ancient Greece, Green Politics, The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics, and leader in many feminist spirituality and Green Movement organizations.*

***January 27, 28, & 29th at the Unitarian Church of Evanston***

*Mark your calendars, tell your friends, and watch your mail for registration flyers.*

# WOMEN OF THE FOURTEENTH MOON



This description of menopausal women—Women of the Fourteenth Moon—is from Eleanor J. Piazza's article, "Women of the Fourteenth Moon—The Ceremony." She reflects: "The name 'Woman of the Fourteenth Moon' came to me as I sought an honoring name for menopausal women. Simply, if there are thirteen full moons in a given year, a woman who has not had a period for a year will begin a new phase in her life upon the fourteenth full moon without bleeding." This article is published in *Women of the 14th Moon: Writings on menopause*. Editors were Dena Taylor and Amber Coverdale Sumrall.

## Chant

Changing Woman,  
We are wise women.  
We are new women.  
We are changing women.  
We are stronger than before.

## Opening Prayer

We gather here this evening to claim menopause as a natural event and a freeing time, not as a disease, a deficiency, or nearness to end time. We gather here to break the silence, the denial, the negativity, the fear that has shrouded menopause. We gather here to proclaim menopause as an integrated and growth-full part of life, as the wisdom years of women rather than as an isolated crisis and time of uselessness. We gather here to listen to our bodies as they speak to us a primordial language linking us to nature's seasonal cycles.

As we delight in the glory of autumn and each of the other seasons, so too we delight in the cycles of our own bodies, month to month, year to year, decade to decade. We join our mothers and grandmothers in the ancient sisterhood of crones, the wise women of our cosmos.

## For Pondering...

How is menopause an opportunity for me to go deeper into myself, to search out my values, to discover what's really important in life?



What wisdom have I gleaned from past years of creativity?

How does menopause influence the deepening of my spirituality?

How does menopause reveal that the chalice holding sacred life-giving blood is within?

What is most energizing for me now?

How is menopause an expansive time in life for me rather than a closing down time?

How do I see myself connected to the great circle of Life?

How do I celebrate being a crone?

"In *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece* (Beacon Press, 1978), Charlene Spretnak explains how the three phases of a woman's life—maiden, mother and crone—were linked with the three phases of the moon. The new moon represented the pure maiden, growing in strength and magic. The full moon symbolized the mother, fully empowered. The waning moon was the crone, filled with wisdom and ready to die and be reborn as the waxing moon." Source: "A Journey of Transformation," Louise Thornton in *Women of the 14th Moon: Writings on Menopause*.

"The gift of loneliness is Self," said May Sarton. How is this true/not true for me?

How does menopause teach me that I am part of the cosmos, intimately connected to Gaia, Mother Earth?

### **Sharing Wisdom...**

#### **A Creed for Free Women (adapted)**

I am.

I am from and of The Mother.

I am as I am.

Willfully harming none, none may question me...

I am Child of every Mother,

Mother of each daughter,

Sister of every woman ....

Together or alone we dance Her Dance,

We do the work of The Mother,

She we have called Goddess for human comprehension.

She, the Source, never-to-be-grasped Mystery,  
Terrible Cauldron, Womb,  
Spinning out of her the unimaginably small  
And the immeasurably vast—  
Galaxies, worlds, flaming suns—  
And our Earth, fertile with her beneficence  
Here, offering tenderest flowers.  
(Yet flowers whose roots may split rock.)

I, we, Mothers, Sisters, ... Friends,  
Infinitely small out of her vastness,  
Yet our roots too may split rock,  
Rock of the rigid, the oppressive  
In human affairs.

Thus is She  
And being of Her  
Thus am I.  
Powered by Her,  
As she gives, I may give,  
Even of my blood and breath:  
But none may require it;  
And none may question me.



I am.  
I am That I am.

—Elsa Gidlow

Source: *She Rises Like the Sun*  
Janine Canan, Editor

### **Selection of Shell and Blessing**

Before us are these shells—a feminine symbol. You are invited to choose a shell to take with you as a reminder of your maiden-mother-crone identity, your cyclic wholeness. As each woman chooses her shell, let us bless her with these words.

.. we bless you in the name of Changing Woman,  
as menopausal woman, as crone. May you go forth to  
share your wisdom as you celebrate Changing Woman  
within and your connectedness with Gaia, Mother  
Earth. So be it.

### **Chant**

Changing Woman,  
We are wise women.  
We are new women.  
We are changing women.  
We are stronger than before.

Created by: Rose Mary Meyer



**Crone's Corner** by Judy Holman

"Love leaves gifts along the way.  
See if you can find some today."

-Christian Science Sentinel

"I have the fervor of myself for  
presence and my own spirit for light."

-H.D.

It's not often anymore that I am thrown for a mental loop. Age has granted me a certain, if unexpected, detachment. This is not to say that I am indifferent to life's events; it's more that I am rarely undone by them. By now, Wisdom has crossed my path more than once, leaving me with hard won lessons. Piled together these lessons have created a kind of cushion against those unsettling moments that have arrived later, usually unannounced, to ruin my well-ordered life. It happened last Tuesday—a day that greeted me warmly, then turned fickle mid-morn. Out of the Blue, I was assaulted by Loss and had to call up Wisdom and the lesson she'd provided long ago. I share this with you in case Loss has stalked you in your little village and ruined your otherwise sunny existence. What good, after all, are the lessons of Wisdom if never passed along?

Last Tuesday I took my car, the Giddyhumpet, in for a check-up. She'd been coughing; her lungs discolored in the morning. But, I thought, like a cold, she'd shake the symptoms. She didn't. The mechanic (younger than some of my earrings), broke the news. It was the carburetor. Eaten through and leaking vital fluid, she'd need a transplant. The price he quoted loosened my knees, and I sat with a sudden, "Oh!"

Startled, he sat down beside me and asked, "Are you O.K.?"

True to my Waspy Ways, I replied, "Yes, yes, I'm fine."

Except I wasn't. You see, I have a birthday coming up. No longer an Innocent when it comes to the Big Ones, I had been preparing for its arrival. Respecting its potential for Mental Mayhem, I had been saving here and there for a year. Now, in one short sentence, it was gone, and then some. While my body took the blow with poise, my mind was working itself into a frothy foam.

"All my savings!" it screamed. "No celebration, Nothing Special! No Birthdayyyy Partyyyyy~"

Before this Banshee like wail escaped through my pores and into the Public Domain, I carefully excused myself, and sought solace with some coffee nearby.

Mulling over a steaming brew, I knew from experience that I needed to get a grip on this Sudden Loss. Give one loss free access to the mind and it runs rampant through the brain, tripping the locks of others held carefully in check. Once free, this Troupe of Trouble would invade my day—or weeks—as well. Needing some mental muscle, I sat peering into my mug as



one might stare into a magic well. Slowly, the scene I needed appeared. It was that Abysmal Moment, years ago, when consumed by Loss, I was handed a treasure to keep.

Looking closer, I saw myself transformed. I was younger, thirty-ish, and in love. Passionately, Insanely, Unwisely to a man who was a) married, b) unschooled but cunning, and c) loving, but with Tomcat traits.

As my therapist would say later, "Judy, if you did not lead such a narrow life, this man would not be the least bit interesting." But I did and he was and like a fly in a web, I was stuck.

His ties were not so tight, however, and the night before my Spring vacation, with his promises of idyllic days on sand and sea, he took off with another, younger woman. I was devastated and headed to the bathroom floor, to be sick or, I hoped, to die. Yet even then, Something, that little piece of ourselves that stands firm when all else collapses and dies, asserted itself. I would go Somewhere alone. The next morning I headed for North Carolina and the Biltmore Estate. May seem like an odd choice, I know, but I needed warmth, beauty and on some level, I needed to see a castle built on firmer ground.

Long, vague hours later, I sat in a touristy-bland, peach and green restaurant. I was, I noted ruefully, the only one Alone. Cheerful chatter, like playful waves, rolled around my table, leaving me stranded on my island of silence. Hoping to fill the void, I opened a pamphlet I'd found, and in the children's section read these words: "Love leaves gifts along the way. See if you can find some today." It wasn't much. A few words by a person I'd never meet from a religion not my own. No matter. Wisdom finds us whenever and however we are finally willing to hear her out. I read them again and again until I felt something stir. It was, I think now, those little seeds of change flung so defiantly the night before by my last little warrior still standing. I sat on that island, bereft of love, self esteem, meaning and hope, and began to look for gifts. It started slowly, haltingly, as most change does, until it gathered a pace of its own.

I'll not mislead you into the Realm of False Hope. My hours on and off the road were aeons long, achingly lonely, requiring one step, one mile, one affirmation at a time. In addition to the misery, though, there ran a parallel thread. My hours were taken up looking for—and finding—the gifts dropped in my path by a Benevolent Spirit with a soft spot for Foolish-but-Recovering women. At first, I only had the energy to note what my eyes saw: forest and field, clouds, rain, sun. Then, I moved to the more personal: Martha, the waitress, with an extra muffin and time for a suffering soul; a lone dog, nose directed toward home, veering long enough to exchange warm gestures of friendship; a little boy, so filled with life's energy that it spilled over into a wave as his father's car passed mine; Mrs. Arlington, who, finding me crying on her backroad property, invited me in for tea and to see the new kittens.

These rich-gifted days couldn't help but heal my spirits and prepare me for what would happen next. I had made it to North Carolina. I was heading west toward Asheville, closing in on my destination. Then, on Route 40, somewhere between Longview and Valdese, I headed for the shoulder, skid-

ding to a stop. Something had hit me. Something I had once known and then forgotten. Staring out over the green gifts of Nature, I announced clearly, if softly-awed, "I am a gift, too!"

It was a bone-jarring thought. Me, with my flukes and flaws, angst and agony, had something to offer. Breathing in the sweet scents and feeling the soft strokes of windy hands, I saw myself as a treasure, worthy of gentle handling, genuine respect and an appropriate recipient. The revelations flooded me and I sat awhile, marveling at the thought of my worth. Leaving the spot, the seeds of change had set down deep roots.

Traveling as a Gift, you've probably guessed, changed my usual style. I stopped sitting in back booths, my face in a book. I stopped staring past and through people near-by. Neither did I hide myself in a closed, dusty trunk of an attitude. A gift, after all, is to share. I sat at counters and widened my mind with tattooed truckers, uniformed troopers, schoolteachers like myself, and anyone else willing to share a story or two. I grinned rather than grimaced, and welcomed into my sphere two scruffy runaways, a still-wounded widow, two ageing bikers and a blended family on their first solo flight. My island was beginning to bloom. On my way South, I had absorbed the gifts so willingly shared. They had filled me and healed my soul. The returning trip allowed me to release them, changed in form. Inhaling and exhaling, resuscitating them back into Life. The breath of the Universe.

Upon returning home, I took my own deep breath and made some changes. After all, a Treasure had returned from the castle and I would no longer be treated like the downstairs maid. We parted soon after, and I began a serious relationship with myself, unwrapping, layer by layer, the marvelous aspects of me. All this swam before me these many years later, reminding me that even in the throes of Loss, gifts abound. I left the restaurant reassured that in my little village of experience, all would be well. The Giddyhumpet would have her new lungs, a gift from me to an old friend, and I would survive—and thrive—on my birthday. I'm already listing my gifts.

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There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and be lost. The world will not have it.

It is not your business to determine how good it is, nor how valuable it is, nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate you. Keep the Channel open.

Quote from Martha Graham to Agnes DeMille

## Welcoming the Beautiful Swan

Shivering in Spring air  
She exhales exhaustion and  
Inhales exhilaration.  
The mirror pond  
Speaks truth...  
White wings...graceful neck...powerful webbed feet  
Inward for a minute, she can hear the echo in her bones.  
Swan...Swan...Swan  
After years of yearning...wishing...and futile pounding  
She slides along...drawn  
By migratory patterns to the  
Rhythmic sounds of a feathery fanfare,  
A watery symphony set to wings.

Every where she turns,  
There is big work now.  
Rich, earthy, epic work.

Mythic birthing work  
Urgent... bloody...exciting

Epic partner work  
Making same old new

Epic friendships.  
Going where charts leave off.  
Falling off edges.  
Living in wide skyward places yet feeling gravity pull.

Mythic merger work in tense committees  
Inventing dances for webbed feet

Mythic creation using stones, and tears, feathers  
and fire

Making space for abundance,  
Making space for loss.

All around her in casual elegance are  
Raw materials and tools enough for several lives

All around her in casual elegance are  
The people...  
Her people singing in blended voice  
That echoes out and out and out into wider community.  
She sings the songs they taught her.

...Lindsay Olson

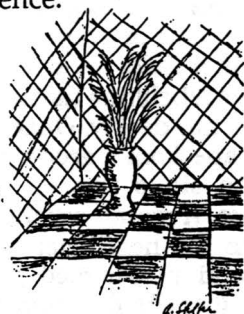




## Domestic Reverie

In my quiet home  
Rings the memory of your voice.  
I am shaking the shingles of your stories over the dirty dishes.  
I am scrubbing my floors with your baptismal tears.  
The dust that collected in my absence  
floats in the light of your attention.  
I am singing new life into the jumbled pantry.  
Under peeling wall paper is the brightest rose essence.  
I listen for your footsteps on the walkway  
You have found the path to my door ....  
And I have let you in!

Bless me with your story once again.  
Grace my home with the brightness of your voice.  
Beloved friend, most welcome guest,  
Here is the seat of honor  
In my quiet home.



...Lindsay Olson, Retreat 94

### UUs Acting to stop violence against women

We invite you to join us in a new step for UUs ACTING. We are asking friends to make an annual pledge to our work. We believe that creating this kind of financial base will help create the kind of long lasting UU organization that can effect change.

Enclosed is a brochure that will give you the information you need to decide if you would like to lend us financial support. We are also enclosing a new program of Study Circles that may be of interest to you or your congregation.

Our pledge goal this year is modest.....\$9,000. We have raised \$1,800 (averaging \$135) at General Assembly and now turn to you to help us raise the remaining \$6,200. We hope to complete this canvass by September 15th. You may make your payment in monthly or quarterly installments. We will send a reminder and a Bulletin updating activities every three months to make the payment easy to remember.

Thank you for giving this request your time.

Marilyn Gentile and Jody Shipley, Core Committee

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PLEDGE FOR JULY 1, 1994- JUNE 30, 1995

for UUS ACTING to stop violence again women

I would like to pledge \$\_\_\_\_\_ for this year  
to be paid Monthly \_\_\_\_\_ Quarterly \_\_\_\_\_ (check one)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ St/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: UUs ACTING Jody Shipley & Marilyn Gentile  
3221 Snyder Avenue, Modesto CA 95356



## **Harriet Tubman**

**by Kat Sojourner**

Harriet Ross Tubman was born into slavery in Bucktown, Maryland around the year 1820. During her long and extraordinary life she proved herself to be a woman of enormous courage and valor. As a young slave, Harriet worked as a field hand and was subject to frequent beatings and whippings. Her rebellious nature displayed itself even in her early years, but her spirit cost her dearly. Once, while still a teenager, Harriet witnessed another slave escape from a grocery store. Harriet blocked the doorway of the store while the slave ran off, physically hindering the runaway's would be captors. A metal weight was thrown at the fleeing slave, but instead hit Harriet in the head. Her skull was fractured. She convalesced for many months and nearly died. For the remainder of her life, Harriet was subject to sleeping spells that occurred several times each day.

It seems her brutal experiences only strengthened Harriet's resolve. The injustice of slavery burned in her very soul and Harriet vowed to free herself. By the middle of the 1800's an "underground railroad" was well established and many people of African descent freed themselves each year via its dangerous path. The underground railroad consisted of an escape route and a series of safe houses leading out of the South into the North. As more and more slaves ran for their freedom in the night, leaders emerged to facilitate the passage. These leaders were called "conductors" of the railroad. Established by free Negroes and supporters such as the Quakers and the Unitarians, the underground railroad eventually became a true financial thorn in the side of Southern slave owners and was a major contributing factor to the outbreak of the Civil War. In 1849, Harriet escaped from slavery and landed in Philadelphia a free woman. Because her family was of major importance to her, Harriet was not content with merely freeing herself. She decided to establish a home in the North, then rescue her family and friends from slavery too. She immediately took various domestic positions and began saving money. Her first trip back to Maryland was in 1850. She rescued a sister and her sister's two children. Thus began the career of the infamous Harriet Tubman who dedicated her life to fighting slavery by any means within her reach. From 1850 through to the outbreak of the Civil War, Harriet made some 19 trips to the South leading more than three hundred slaves to safety in the North via the underground railroad. Her trips were mostly to Maryland, but she expanded her conducting even into the dreaded Deep South. At first she guided her followers to Philadelphia or New England, but after the introduction of a law mandating escaped slaves be returned to the South, Harriet conducted freed slaves to Canada. She was called the "Moses" of her people. Moses never lost her way nor were any of her charges recaptured.

The notoriety of the woman called Moses was wide spread and she was avidly sought by authorities in the South. Posters bearing her description were hung all through the South and as much as \$40,000 was offered for her capture, a truly staggering sum for this time. Harriet was a consummate actress and master of disguise. She frequently pretended to be an aged woman. Once she passed her former master on the streets of Maryland but was not recognized by him. Another ploy she used with success was to steal a carriage and horses from a slave owner and have the escaping slaves openly ride out of town. Whites never expected slaves on the run to have that much audacity! Harriet frequently guided and communicated with escaping slave parties through the use of spirituals. Again, the arrogance of the white slave holders was such that they did not suspect slaves to employ song as direction. "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" was sung to spread the news about railroad conductors bringing slaves to freedom while "Follow the Dipping Gourd" instructed slaves to be guided by the North Star and "Go Down Moses" was sung about Harriet herself. In the North, Harriet was widely supported and respected by members of Abolitionist movement. She was also a suffragist. Among those who were her compatriots were Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Gerrit Smith and John Brown. Ironically, Harriet refused several times to meet with Abraham Lincoln, because of his wavering position on abolition. She later expressed regret at doubting his sincerity.

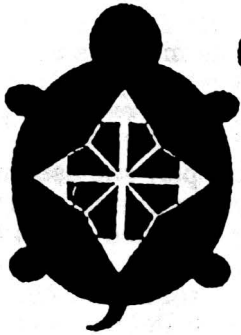
When the Civil War began, Harriet was predictably involved in the fight against slavery. She worked first as a nurse and later, because of her knowledge of the South, was recruited as a spy and soldier. She infiltrated the South, and obtained the support of slaves who wished to escape. She then led them to safety. In 1863, she proposed and guided a major raid along the Combahee River in South Carolina. Supplies were cut off to the rebel forces due to this raid and seven hundred and fifty slaves were rescued. Harriet was widely recognized as a war hero and received many certificates of accommodation. Shamefully, after the war Harriet was given no veterans pension. In later years she lived in poverty. After a prolonged national outcry at this scandal, Harriet was awarded \$20 per month. She lived into her nineties and died peaceably in 1913.

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**VIDEOS AVAILABLE**  
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•The Trilogy produced by Donna Read for the Canadian Broadcasting System, "**Goddess Remembered, Burning Times and Full Circle,**" is available for lending from the CMD/W & R, Committee. Cost is \$5 rental, and \$25 deposit Contact: **Fran Reynolds,** 902 E. Sunset Lane, Columbia MO 65203 314-443-4336. •

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# CAMP RONORA

## WEEKEND SCHEDULE

### Friday, August 5th

- 5-9 PM Registration, setting up tents, bunking in, etc.
- 6 PM Dinner
- 8 PM Opening Ceremonies

### Saturday, August 6th

- 5:30AM Dawn Observance
- 6:30AM Tai Chi, Yoga on the grass
- 7-9 AM Breakfast
- 9:30AM Morning Ceremony
- 10 AM Teaching Lodge & Workshops
- NOON Lunch
- 2 PM Teaching Lodge & Workshops
- 4 PM Open Time (Swimming, browsing, talking, wood walks, etc.)
- 6-8 PM Dinner
- 7:45PM Sunset Observance
- 8:15PM Maiden/Mother/Wise Woman Welcoming Ceremony  
Entertainment, Open Drumming, Dancing

### Sunday, August 7th

- 7 AM Tai Chi, Yoga on the grass, Weed Walk
- 7-9AM Breakfast
- 10 AM Closing Ceremony, Blessing the Children, sharing experiences  
Closing the Council Drum, Give-Away
- 12:30 Lunch & Goodbyes

**CAMP RONORA NATURE  
PRESERVE & RETREAT  
CENTER, WATERVLIET,  
MICHIGAN August 5-7  
1994**

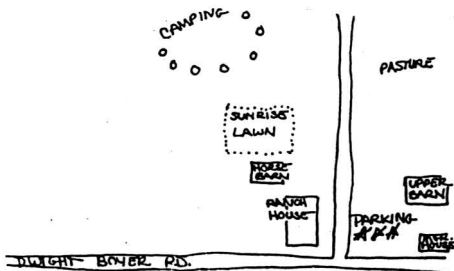
### SPIRIT MOTHER SPEAKS

Once I was an infant, secure in mother's arms,  
and then I was a child running free.  
Once I was a maiden in full flower  
and then a fertile mother with a babe.  
At these stages of my life  
I never knew my loveliness,  
but now I see it in you.

Once I was in middle years,  
nurturing the young,  
making a home and making my way,  
holding the weight of all this  
in my strong and loving arms.  
I never knew my beauty and worth  
but now I see it in you.

Once I was an old woman  
at last with time to think,  
making peace with life and death,  
compassion shining from her eyes.  
I never knew my radiance  
until I saw it in you.  
Now I see it in you.

MAP OF CAMP RONORA  
(NOT TO SCALE)



### CAMP RONORA

included Teaching Lodges: "Herbs for First Aid" taught by Althea Northgate Orr; Circle of Power by Phaedra Oorbeck; "Mother Earth Spirituality" led by Darla Legett, co-founder of Camp Ronora; and Women & Religion Committee members on "How to capture the WomanSpirit and integrate it into your home congregation."

Morning workshops included "Personal Treasures" facilitated by Judy Holman, "Maiden" by Renae Rebechini, "Mother" led by Lynn Lidbury and Wisewoman with Helen Hughes. Afternoon workshops were "Telling Your Story" by Carol Baker, "Rattlemaking" with Melinda Perrin and "Drumming" with Marianne Solome & Beth Ligouri.

Approximately 87 women and 13 children attended the first annual summer gathering sponsored by the Central Midwest District Women and Religion Committee. It was a success but a lot of work for the Committee. If women are interested in being a part of the planning or helping with the conference, please contact Fran Reynolds, Chair of W & R.

### CLOSING CEREMONY

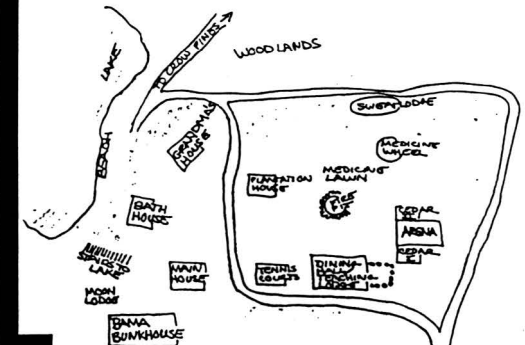
WomanSpirit, 1994

There was a circle down in the grass  
bound by diverse women  
and a circle on high  
in a sky of blue and white  
formed by the boughs of great trees.  
We were here to say goodbye.

We nurtured the beauty in one another,  
each fearless in sharing her voice.  
We welcomed the voices of the trees  
and the many forms of life.  
We felt the renewal of earth.

Welcome, female spirit, said the earth,  
Welcome, time of woman power,  
still tentative but growing strong  
with each beat of the drum.

We were women bidding farewell,  
reluctant to leave the communion,  
the joining of links forming  
within the great circles  
of earth and sky.



## REGENERATION



July's headlines celebrated sunflowers  
And a farmer standing in a field abloom  
As he marked his year beyond the flood:

Anniversary of raging waters gone wild with excessive rain.

*In photo print*

Wayne Hilgedick looks out on growing beans and corn,  
Over acres of sunflowers  
Planted instead of wheat  
In sand-invaded bottomlands.

A friendly man, Hilgedick,

Confident

Humble

Dependent upon rain,

His fields, a living testimony of rebirth.

Life goes on beyond each flood and drouth, beyond excess.

Wayne is a neighbor from Hartsburg,  
One of countless farmers, shopkeepers, truckers, clergy, landowners  
Hit hard in 'ninety three;

In 'ninety four, growing sunflowers,  
Seed for backyard feeders,  
Seed transformed to air-borne song.

A man of Missouri stock, settled in rich bottomlands:

His life-efforts

And his father's toil before him

Wiped out by a water-fed crest that kept rising.

All destroyed

But the will to re-begin.

In aftermath of rain unending

Farmers plant again on weathered soil:  
Soybeans and corn,  
And high-yield sunflowers growing in the sand.

A steady smile speaks to the quiet strength of optimism:  
Eyes, marked with assurance,  
Scan the green field,  
Affirm regeneration.

Sunflowers bloom in sandy soil.

Their faces turn to sunlight;  
Their heads  
Heavy with new seed  
Bow from weight atop straight, reedy stalks.

Beyond the pillage of flood  
Beyond future drouth  
And plague some year to come

Rich soil regenerates,  
  
Damaged by circumstance  
But not destroyed.

Farmers clear debris  
Till the sand-choked soil  
And plant again.

Thirsted roots reach toward moisture  
Held in reserve through cyclic change  
In deep aquifers.

Sunflowers bloom and yield seed on sand.

By Naoma Powell, August, 1994  
Columbia, MO





## Starting a Moon Circle

### Take the risk and do it.

Call a few likely people, or put up an inviting poster in your church.

### Sit in a circle and at the same eye level.

You don't want the same old hierarchical pattern. Create a setting for equality.

### Ask for commitment.

We agreed that if someone missed three consecutive meetings, without calling any of us to let us know, we would consider that she had withdrawn. In thirty moons only one has left in this way, by attrition.

### Rotate leadership and/or houses.

This avoids any one person becoming the guru, or being over worked and burned out.

### Respect confidentiality.

While this is not a therapy group, it needs to be a safe place where people can speak freely without fear of being quoted - or misquoted - outside the group.

### Mark the beginning and the end of a meeting.

Sacred time and sacred space are marked at the threshold. Let there be an agreed upon beginning, middle and end.

### Use a "talking stick" for discussion and sharing times.

Each has a turn, without interruption.

### Ask each other and yourself for honesty.

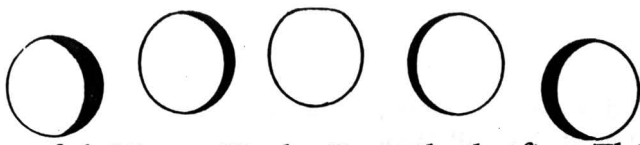
### Expect changes. Look for them and valorize them.

### Always include time for socializing, feasting and fun.

**To evaluate your group, ask these questions:** Can each person speak and really be listened to enough to feel a sense of ownership in the group? Does having this group in your life make you feel more empowered and challenged than you otherwise would? Do you look forward to the Circle as something for you, not just another obligation? Can you be honest? angry? vulnerable? trusting? Does being part of this group lead you to positive and independent action outside it? Do you feel accepted as you are? Is there a balance over time between what you're giving and what you're receiving from others?

If mostly yeses, you have a psychic family, a bonding, healing, inspiring Moon Circle.

This advice and The Moon Circle described on pages 19 & 20 are by Helen Hughes, Park Forest, a W & R Committee member.



## A Successful Moon Circle, Described after Thirty Months. (Thirty Moons)

Our group formed in May 1991 and at our first meeting, on May Day, we danced around the maypole, even though we had to do it indoors, and for lack of a pole, I sat in the middle and held aloft the staff around which the others wove the ribbons and we wove ourselves together. We shared ritual, food, and our stories. It was a beginning that was to set the pattern for all the succeeding meetings: first, sacred remembering of our common ancient past, through ritual; second, sharing of our personal stories -- our lives not so much as our histories, as of the events of the past week, where we are now, what we have to tell, what we need from each other; and third, the feasting, also known as potluck, the well-known Unitarian Universalist way for women to share a meal without anyone having to do all the work. We all know it well! And we all like to feast.

We recorded this first meeting and most of the subsequent meetings in a hand-written, passed-around book, that our founder, Elizabeth, provided and maintained for the first few months. Others have assumed this responsibility.

We rotated homes. The home-keeper assumed the responsibility for designing the ritual for that month. All the practical chores are shared: setting up and cleaning up. This group sees to it that no one is left with a mess

The ritual varies according to who is doing it. I am influenced by the Native American traditions, particularly the Oglala Sioux, as well as by my ethnic roots, which are Wales and England and thus Celtic-Druid, so that led me to my style. Others are deeply immersed in ancient Greek myths, Minoan images, Wiccan traditions. (I wish we had an Asian woman, to bring in KwanYin or an African-American woman to bring in Oshun, but in the absence of those members, we have sometimes included those goddesses. Nancy Vedder-Schultz brings in Amaratessu through her tape.)

The ritual is eclectic: it may or may not include drumming and chanting; it may or may not include "casting the circle, invoking the spirits, dismissing the spirits, opening the circle". What remains after these differences is a common agreement: that is, that we are in sacred space and time, that we honor whatever in us is ancient and holy, that we share ourselves with each other in a loving bond of openness/acceptance and non-judgment, that we listen to each other and receive each other, and that we feast and have a good time. That may include dancing and singing and howling under the moon among the oak trees...or it may be a quiet time around a fireplace, or even in the dark, with not even one candle burning. That is special, too.



From these diverse traditions, what do we have in common?

We gather at the Full Moon.

We celebrate cycles: the day, the week, the month, the season, the year, our lives.

We celebrate and honor NATURE, stones, seashells, flowers... we are ecologists.

We have decided to keep the group open only to women and to keep the size at 13.

Both those decisions required hours of discussion and pondering: as long as one women felt that she would feel less safe and happy in a group that included men, we agreed to keep our Moon Circle for women only. We deferred to some future date the possibility of including men in our circle. To accommodate that decision, we agreed to have open equinoxes and solstices: four festivals a year (not rituals; festivals) that would include everybody - husbands, children, friends, relatives. We do this. It's kind of my responsibility, the equinoxes and solstices, and we include lots of people who are not "into" our Pagan consciousness, but whom we like or love and are related to. The other decision: to keep the size at 13, also took quite a lot of discussion. People knew a friend who wanted to join. One night we had 15 and the house and the capacity of the group to attend to and embrace every member was strained. This was the ninth moon (gestational period) and the first crisis (and only crisis so far) the group has faced. At the conclusion of an intense and emotional evening, the group had decided to be eclectic in its ritual practice (in the best traditions of Liberal Religion) and to maintain a limit of 13 members. Thirteen is not a mystical number, although it did not escape our notice that we have 13 moons in a solar year; and even that 13 is the number of Jesus and his disciples; but mostly we found that we could handle, accommodate, relate to on an intimate level nor more than 13. We decided not to grow too big, or too quickly, but to regulate our decisions, not on authority but on our own experience, to experiment and try different ideas, to develop a tradition that is our own, to become a dynamic group and a beloved community. Following that evening, we lost two members who were committed to a more Wiccan tradition and did not feel comfortable with our U-U eclecticism.

(For those of you who have some experience and knowledge of group dynamics, you know it is a truism that groups develop sub-groups...also known as factions... and the viability of a group lies in its ability to maintain its character without being split into sub-groups, or factions. If a group can weather this dynamic, it may be successful for a very long time.)

WORLD WOMEN'S CONFERENCE  
Beijing, China



NGO FORUM\*

(Non-governmental Organizations)

Itinerary #1: WOMEN'S ISSUES IN CHINA

Aug. 19 - Sept. 5, 1995 (18 days)

Itinerary #2: CHINA ADVENTURE

Aug. 19 - Sept. 5, 1995 (18 days)

Hello!

You have expressed an interest in the 4th International U.N. Women's Conference/NGO FORUM in China next summer (1995).

GOOD NEWS!

Enclosed are two itineraries. Please look them over and then ASAP let me know "your druthers".

Itinerary #1: WOMEN'S ISSUES IN CHINA

San Jose State University offers an 18-day deluxe tour (August 19 - September 5, 1995) which provides the option of two units of upper-division Sociology credits (SOC 180). The cost is \$3,698. (double occupancy) and includes Round Trip airfare from San Francisco, all transfers, all intra-China flights, city tours, professional guides, Li River Cruise, all meals except for four days during the NGO FORUM;

Welcome and Farewell special dinners, Visa, registration fee to the NGO FORUM, background materials, and an academic escort plus special meetings with Chinese women in Beijing. Visit Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guilin and Beijing. Most meals.

Itinerary #2: CHINA ADVENTURE

Ventures Extraordinaire offers an 18-day tour (August 19 - September 5, 1995). The cost is \$2,894. (double occupancy) which includes Round Trip airfare from the West Coast, all transfers and intra-China flights, professional guides, and lunch except for five days during the NGO FORUM in Beijing when breakfast only is included (hotel is walking distance to NGO FORUM); three special dinners—Welcome Dinner in Shanghai, Tang Dynasty Dinner Show in Xian, and Farewell Peking Duck Dinner in Beijing. Also included is your Visa, NGO registration fee, city tours, Li River Cruise, background materials and escort. An optional 5-day extension (includes bfst, hotel, and transfer to airport only) returning to the United States on Sept. 9, 1995 is an additional \$225.

SPACE IS LIMITED. Reserve space now! Send your \$300. deposit now! *In order to secure a Group Visa, we will need a photocopy of the first page of your valid Passport by June 1, 1995.*

NGO FORUM '95

Yes! I am interested in a tour to China which includes the World Women's Conference in Beijing, August 1995. Please reserve space for me on:

\_\_\_ Trip #1: WOMEN'S ISSUES IN CHINA Aug. 19- Sept. 5, 1995 (SJSU: \$3698.)

\_\_\_ Trip #2: CHINA ADVENTURE Aug. 19- Sept. 5, 1995 (Ventures: \$2894.)

\_\_\_ Also, sign me up for the 5-day Extension (returning to U.S. on Sat., Sept. 9, 1995) @\$225.  
(Available only for participants of Trip # 2.)

Enclosed please find:

\_\_\_ A deposit check for \$300. made out to Meg Bowman (or San Jose State University if Trip #1 was selected. Either way is okay!)

\_\_\_ I wish to purchase Trip Cancellation Insurance for Trip # 2 so have added \$131. to my deposit check.

\_\_\_ I desire to pay a Single Supplement in order to have a single room to myself, and will pay the additional \$690. (Tour #1) or \$735. (Tour #2) before May 19, 1995.

Call Meg if you have any questions: (408) 292-1172 or 924-5325.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to network with women from all over the world. Travel with those who share your concerns and interests!

NOTE: There are two conferences:

- \* NGO FORUM: Aug. 30-Sept. 8, 1995. (Non-Governmental Organizations open to everyone.)
- \* Official U.N. 4th International Women's Conference: Sept. 4-15, 1995 (for official government delegates and those with Press Pass only.)

We will attend the NGO FORUM:

Mail to : Meg Bowman, Hot Flash Press, Box 21560  
San Jose, CA 95151 (408) 292-1172



## IN MEMORY

John, dearly beloved first-born son. As countless images flash through my mind, I am moved to tears by memories of your life. From the time your father wore a path to the nursery in the hospital, when you were born, to the time when you practiced driving the car up and down the driveway as you impatiently waited for your license, to the dreadful, final sadness of your death, I reflect on the ways that you and I dealt with life.

We often chose ways that were not easy or wise, and sometimes the lessons of life were very painful for both of us. Letting go has always been very difficult for me, and we struggled with that. Now that is all behind us. I will miss your charming smile, but it will always remain for us to enjoy in Kaid's dimples.

We thank you for the precious gifts of your sons, Bryan and Kaid. Bryan's quiet steadiness and Kaid's sunshine smile are blessings, and we are thankful that you brought Lori and Timber into our lives.

As your spirit soars free and you are reunited with your brother Jeff and your grandfather who loved you dearly, may you find peace in your transition. I wish I, like my father, could have offered you unconditional love. The joys you brought into our life will be remembered long after grief fades.

Your craftsman skills and your love of building and working with your hands are ever present in our home. We live each day enjoying the work that you did. I write this in the beautiful sun room that you and your dad so lovingly built. He will greatly miss working with you.

The ragged hole in my heart will become smaller with time, and its edges may become somewhat smoother, but it will never heal altogether. I love you and will miss you terribly.

... Joanne Fought

*We are here*

*FROM DIFFERENT WORLDS, DIFFERENT LIVES.*

*Each has lived a different week,*

*EACH HAS LIVED A DIFFERENT LIFE.*

*We are unique and different women,*

*YET WE COME HERE TOGETHER IN SISTERHOOD.*

*We seek the humanness that is in us all,*

*WE SEEK THE TRUTH THAT IS IN US ALL*

*We seek the understanding that is in us all.*

*WE SEEK THE LOVE THAT IS IN US ALL.*

# CLUTTER

by Mariah Mabee

## PART I

Well, well- -

So this is what I meant by clutter!

Overstuffed furniture

AND

Old relationships that still don't work - -

An eight harness loom, all those yarns

AND

The way I weave them into - - "yes, of course I will."

"To do" and grocery lists: both as long as my arms

AND

Me saluting

A big house shuttered

AND

Blocking out my own interior light

## PART 2

I

EAT

So much food that doesn't nourish

MY

Body, not any part of me. I must

FILL

Life with the simple and the clear

Be rid of

closets of hats I never wear

Games I no longer play.

Be rid of clutter

that pollution of my soul

## PANCAKE MAKE-UP

- The way it was -

by Mariah Mabee

We turned our faces to food,  
Our hands spatulas  
Poking, Patting, Pressing.  
We were "the girls"  
No longer "sparks in  
Daddy's eyes,"  
But fully formed cook stoves  
Changing batter to cake.



Venetian blinds pulled up  
Enabled facial analysis.  
We were serious cooks  
All aprons and pretty faces.  
How do we look? we asked ourselves  
Again and again  
How do we look?

We stared into mirrors  
We poured ourselves into pancake faces.  
We wanted to be sizzlers,  
Sweet as syrup  
Married with a baby  
In the oven.  
Little Pancake People  
All gobbled up.



### BIRTHDAY MUSINGS

*I have a confession to make,  
Hear me to the end --  
The Goddesses within me  
Make such a magical blend,  
First Persephone the maiden,  
So innocent and demure,  
If only I had known at her age  
My unawakened body had allure  
Before I ever became a mother,  
But that's another tale to tell --  
As last the joys of giving birth  
Come in my heart to dwell,  
And now when in the mirror  
A not too haggard face I see,  
Wisdom rises from within --  
Maiden, mother, crone are all of me.  
... Maren Carpenter, Homewood, IL*



This Bibliography was prepared by the Central Midwest District-Unitarian Universalist Association Women and Religion Committee in 1994 in answer to requests from women attending WomanSpirit Conferences and CMD-UUA Workshops given by the Women and Religion Committee. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list, nor one representing one point of view, but one where our personal favorites are listed. All books are in paperback.

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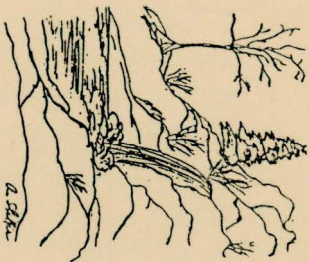
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