

Grandmothers Circle of News

Weaver's note: Keeping with the inclusion of a ceremony within each newsletter, the thought did not occur to me regarding leave-taking. This brought to mind deep feelings and respect for those involved as well as expanding view of Spirit at work. I hope this ceremony brings something to each of the readers as well.

GRANDMOTHER'S LEAVE-TAKING By Mary Ann Reed

I first spoke with Marti Beddoe for some time on the phone back in May of 2007, and having been "recommended" to her by a mutual friend, I was sure I wanted to experience the Grandmothers Peer Spirit Circle. I was not disappointed a month later when I participated in a very lovely ritual-based circle. I have been coming back ever since. When Marti Beddoe invited me to dinner one November evening, I was delighted to begin deepening our relationship which began 18 months earlier at my first Heartland Grandmothers Council Circle.

While Marti did indicate she wanted to deepen our friendship, she also shared her desire to take leave "intentionally" from the Heartland Council. Although I was predictably disappointed, I so honored her thoughtful and prayerful decision to follow Spirit; I was greatly moved when she entrusted me with the crafting of the ceremony to accomplish this delicate, important rite of passage. Marti agreed to communicate her decision with our Heartland Council prior to the December circle (see Marti's note and, "All is Change; All is Well"). Since Marti was insistent the Circle not "be all about [her],"

the December circle not be "all about [her]", I honored her wishes

I honored her wish by including traditions and experiences of the Heartland Council prior to our break time. The remaining time following the break would be devoted to Marti's leave-taking and leave-granting.



INTENTIONAL LEAVE-TAKING

Marti was given time to share from her heart regarding her decision. Next, she gifted each Grandmother with written appreciations to be read silently. This was beautiful! Our Heart Round essentially consisted of our responses to Marti's announcement, as well as our heartfelt thoughts of other transitions in our lives.

In a variation on the Grandmother Give Away, I had invited each Grandmother to come prepared with something special they wished to send forth with Marti. As could be expected, the gifts covered a broad range, each was absolutely unique. I think it is fair to say Marti was greatly moved, as were we all, by the thoughtfulness imbued upon each gift.

To signal the beginning of the ritual portion, I invited two Grandmothers most new to our circle to hold a purple stole above Marti's head, slowly placing it upon her shoulders. This action was meant to replicate a similar Native American ceremony during which women hold a red cloth over the head of another entering her wisdom years, while she passed beneath it symbolizing entering menopause. Since this was also a rite of passage and the color of purple represents spirituality, the two seemed to fit.

LEAVE-GRANTING

Next, the four eldest Grandmothers present were prepared beforehand to present Marti a

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symbol representing one of the four Elements; each added her own words to the prepared script.

The Four Elements:

Earth – sustenance. Object, a desert rose.

“Marti, go forth with the Spirit of Earth, who sustains us with Her permanence. Accept this desert rose, created of sand, swirled and tempered, symbol of both grounding and change.”

Wind – momentum. Object, a flute.

“Marti, go forth with the Spirit of Wind, who propels us and en-livens us with Her breath. Accept this flute, which gives expression to the soul and sends the Self forth into the world.”

Fire – energy. Object, a candle.

“Marti, go forth with the Spirit of Fire, who enervates us
Accept this candle, which gives both light and warmth to body and soul.”

Water – cleansing. Object, small bottle of water.

“Marti go forth with the Spirit of Water, who cleanses and refreshes us with Her very body. Accept this water from the ‘big lake’, symbol of the beginnings of life and the vastness of human experience.” *(cont'd page 2)*

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The ritual was completed by playing Janne Shenandoah's “Women's Dance”⁹ (Lifeblood album) as Grandmothers used rattles or rhythm instruments, approaching Marti individually to pray over her either silently or aloud, sending her forth with blessings and love.

Check-out was conducted as usual; we then completed our formal time together by joining in a song by Marsie Silvestro.

“May You”

May you walk in the ways of the women who went before you.
And may you hear their voices sigh like the wind that gently shakes you.
And know that you are not alone,
For we all go with each other.
Yes know that you are not alone,
As you seek which is your path.
May you walk in the ways of the women who went before you.
And may you feel their laboring hands work to clear the road you take.

So know that you are not alone,
For we all go with each other.
Yes know that you are not alone,
As your fears push through the pain

May you walk in the ways of the women who went before you.

And may you see that like the rain they will send thee healing down.

So know that you are not alone,
For we all go with each other.
Yes know that you are not alone,
For you sister's by your side.

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

As you walk in the ways of the women who went before you.
 With the women who ARE before you
 May You Walk.....

*Words and Music c. 1993, 2004 Marsie Sylvestro. "On the Other Side",
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marsiemoon@earthlink.net*

As it happened, each Grand- mother present participated in the ceremony. There had been no plans as such but as is know, Spirit watching over us included all in Her ways.

Even though we were attentive to our time lines of Circle from be-ginning to end of ceremony, it took us a great deal of time to actually part with Marti and her lovely home. We knew this was not good-bye, yet there was such difficulty ending our time together. It was a very lovely, emotional time for all of us. I am personally saddened Marti will not be sitting in Circle with us, but know I truly have found a new friend and friendship which shall continue blossoming. As Marti entrusted me with creat-ing her ritual, I received renewed energy and reawakened desire to use my gifts for creating cere-monies as well as a new realize-tion of the depth of those gifts.

Marti's intentional leave-taking was indeed bitter sweet, but that's what keeps life juicy!



Weaver's note: following is the email sent by Marti and containing the note as referenced by Mary Ann. I included the entirety of the note as being of importance to the process.

"Hi B,

Beloved Grandmothers from the Four Directions,

This is a story about the power of intentional leave-takings. By the time I was in 7th grade, our family had moved so often that I had at- tended five schools in three states. I had no help with the sorrow of saying goodbye and the pain of being the "new girl" once again. This left a strong impression on me. As I matured, I searched for harmonious ways of saying goodbye. I had many learning experiences about attaching and detaching, and of course, sought help and wisdom in coming to terms with the inevitable good- bye of death/transition.

I was impressed to discover that healthy PeerSpirit circle practice encourages circle members to create intentional leave-takings. For the last three years, our Coun- cil had made the January meeting a time of review, and renewal of commitment to one another. I knew that if I requested it, the Grandmothers of the Heartland Council would honor my leave-taking in a beautiful manner.

Here is a portion of the note I wrote after asking Grandmother Mary Ann Reed to create a ceremony for me.

Subject: All is Change; All is Well.

Dear Grandmothers of the Heart-land Council,

After a year of careful reflection and with the celebration of my 60th birthday last month, I must heed the call to navigate the next passage in my journey. This call is to deepen myself as a teacher and practitioner of Kriya Yoga meditation...

I am needing to focus my energy and turn my attention on creating the third trimester of this life. So, I am writing to ask your blessings as I complete, for now, my partici- pation in the Heartland Council of Grandmothers.

For my own sense of closure and for the opportunity to express my gratitude for all that you have given me, I am requesting such an intentional leave-taking Decebmer 14 (12 months and three

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When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

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days after my heart was repaired).

Mary Ann will guide this effort and let us know her thoughts. I look forward to being with each of you and will have a large supply of tissues!

Grandmother Mary Ann created and gracefully led a meaningful ceremony that allowed everyone present to have a peaceful, conscious closing of a chapter in our life as a Council. We laughed and cried, reflected on our struggles with goodbyes, built common memory by telling stories, and shared our appreciations. It was all I had hoped and more--some very deep wounds from childhood were symbolically healed.

I am forever grateful for each and every Grandmother I have had the joy of meeting since 2002. You are in my heart now and always.

All my Purple Love,
Grandmother Marti Beddoe”
martibeddoe@msn.com



POEM: GRANDMOTHERS

Weaver's Note: Grandmother Lorraine Norrgard shared this wonderful poem sent to her from Charlotte Marie –

“Aloha Beautiful ones; I should be rehearsing BUT.. this came through in a few minutes...can't resist those urges... I am sure you know how it is...”

Your hands move in trance
stroking a thousand weary heads, preparing feasts, dressing a thousand wounds
medicine unconditionally streaming from the waterfall of love
a heart filled with vision you live to give
borne from the gift of birth, unadorned and relentless you pave the path of the
Dream walk ...
Not caring to be noticed but needing to be
Heard for the sake of the dreamers...You stand in dignity more beautiful than
more beautiful than the throws of youth.
We the daughters honor your silent call
humbled and tossed wounds heal on the other side of compassion
for in that grace, true intent speaks in tones between words ..,
We
the daughters, know in spirit's song the winds have a different air now, yet
truth remains the same
Remember and come back to the way of the dream, the earth yields the fruit of
your wisdom, the sea caresses and heals deeper than the bone,
the sky beholds the answers at the wake of the sun, song of the moon, splendor
of the stars and morphing amakua in the cloud rainbows. The thunder wahine
warrior demanding we pay attention, and the rain quenching drought, freely
giving when fed.

We the daughters with foreheads to your feet, our hearts rise in gratitude
you knew us naked as babies, now we are naked as women, you carefully clothe us
thread by thread preparing us for the walk of being the dream.



When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

www.charlottemarie.co

Film, Performance and Recording Artist

News from the Councils

Update from the Texoma Gathering

Call of Gathering pending; announcement to appear in next Circle of news or contact Nonine Anderson (520)-888-1762 for more information. This will be the fifth in a continued series.s

Get Ready! 2009 Arizona Gathering Oct.10-13

Theme:
"Wind Dancing-
Spiral to Awakening"

NOTE: REGISTRATION IS FULL! WAITING LIST REMAINS OPEN. Our Planners have set the intention and begun creating the framework for our upcoming Arizona Council of Grandmothers Gathering. If you've attended a Gathering or two, you already know that when elder women get together there will be tears, laughter, drumming and plenty of love and wisdom to go around. There's no telling what can happen.

You might make new connections, deepen existing friendships or discover new depth in yourself. You might encourage another Grandmother to find her voice. No one else can bring your unique spirit and energy to this inspiring setting. Please join us at Pocket Sanctuary, Tumacacori, Arizona. For more information, contact **Bobbie Goodman** (520) 751-3879 allang97@hotmail.com or **Irene Walden** (520) 795-0400 iwalden@cox.net.

Gulf Coast Gathering

Mar. 25 – 28. 2010

*Theme: Dragonfly Medicine....
Celebrating Transformation*

Take note ladies, **we have a new location!** We will gather at the Visitation Monastery in Mobile, Alabama. For more info, contact Carolyn Garbett (251) 945-1295 or

Joan Marker (251) 295-7972 or Terry Bourne (251) 978-7652.

Check out the new site at visitationmonasterymobile.org

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The Fruit of B's Loom

Greetings

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

Grandmothers!

from B Campbell



As I sit at my desk, gazing toward the desert landscape lush with a beautiful pair of cardinals at the feeder near my window. Studying their brilliant colors, male different from female, my mind rests in the moment. I seem to be falling into a similar peace-ful, ease with the Circle of News; just as the brilliance of the cardinals' colors fill my eyes, so do those of the Grandmothers. My heart fills with the colors of love and inspiration brought so close through this thing called the Circle of News. As the result of num-erous continued health challenges and events in my life, several Grandmothers have tenderly, gently and with great care inquired whether my role as Newsletter Weaver may be more than I can carry at the moment. My response is that actually the Circle of News nurtures me and is a source of joy.

I have a daughter, my only daughter, Kelly. Bright, red-haired, spiritual, energetic, gor-geous, healthy, runner of 10k's, working single mother of my two precious grandchildren, Olivia, 12, and Tom, 15. She is 42 and recently diagnosed with breast can-cer. How can this be? Why not me in her stead? Spirit moves and spins and turns and stands by us and leads us. Kelly does not have lymph node involvement, no chemotherapy is necessary but will have radiation. And, so it is. I request prayer in her behalf and for my grandchildren.

The cardinals remain brilliant at the feeder – I watch them. There is peace.



Wisdom Words from Grandmother Nonine Anderson, "It is important to know where we are and move into this space now."

Listen

**For Shirley Tassencourt and all the Grandmothers**

Weaver's Note: Barry sent this poem- with a note: "Hello B. You can tell from Shirley's age in this poem that it's and old one [poem]. Yet somehow I wanted it to be read now – I'm not sure why...."

Earlier we walked some of this land
 she's chosen to live on now at 69 –
 not orchard, bottomland, irrigated fields
 nothing to yield or use,
 earth the Apaches moved through,
 place they were severed from last century.
 Just rock formations looming or lipping
 out of sparse range grasses,
 herds of small hills that lope away
 toward the Dragoons,
 once the center, the stronghold, for keen Cochise.
 "What will you do with this land?" She doesn't hesitate: "Let it speak."

Toward evening

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

in her hermitage of sand-bagged earth
 we gather. Listen to the silence
 in prayer for the paralyzed friend,
 to poems we read or recite
 (and to the spaces between them
 where the world comes close),
 feel the aquifer of experience
 running deep in our eyes.

The whole time we are contained
 in the continuum of dusk-light
 which rises, holds like a bright petal,
 and begins its graceful, tender fade.
 Light which we are given
 to see things at our age.
 Same light last summer driving down
 and out of the Mogollon Rim at dusk.
 There had been a rain.
 The asphalt roadway outside Clifton
 was shining with wetness.
 Other definition was blurring
 but that long straightaway became a luminous arrow
 shooting directly at Mt. Graham
 Apache holy mountain
 rising from the plain mysteriously black lit
 huge, dark, imposing:

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ready to speak

O grandmothers
 we are being called back to listen
 where natives knew their earth.
 In last light it is time.
 Together let us put our ears
 to the ground.

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

By Barry Ryan



Peace Across the Planet Project Shiva Lingam Listening

By Karleena Ravenwood

Last fall [2008], I was invited to be an Intent Holder in Tucson for the *Peace Across the Planet Project*. We (my partner John and I) have a three-foot standing Shiva Lingam in our backyard that moved in prior to us while a crew worked to restore the interior of the 50's bungalow we had recently purchased in a down-sizing mood. About two years later, I discovered our friends, Tohmas and Marilyn had launched this Project as a result of "listening" to a large Shiva Lingam which they had placed in New Mexico. By *lis-tening* they learned placing Shiva Lingams in the ground vetically in various parts of the country creates a network field of energy to assist humans in making the enormous shifts being required of us at this time of cosmic/earthly transformation. Humans gathering at designated *listening* times do, by intention, offer their support in return.

This is what we did in a small gathering on Sunday, May 24 at 3pm for about an hour. People took turns reading the *listening* I received that morning. Someone played a Native American flute; with a fountain burbling nearby, women in the circle used birch sticks (which I had received from Lorraine Norrgard at the last AZ Council) while singing Nibi Wabo. Other offerings were made.

On a hot Arizona day, the wind picked up and clouds covered the sun for the exact duration of Nibi Wabo as we stood around the stone in what otherwise would have been a hot, sunny circle. After the ceremony, as people began to take their leave, the wind died, the sun came out. Blessings all; sun, clouds, burbling water, willing two-leggeds, standing stone. Blessed be.

*Weaver's Note: I encourage each to visit, peaceacrosstheplanet.org to learn more and see photos of Karleena. **For an additional treat**, if you have an interest in hearing the Nibi Wabo song, call Grandmother Lorraine (218-879-2288); she has offered to sing it to you!*

Grandmother Martha Mann's Rice Pudding



Weaver's Note: as mentioned in Celebrations of Life, March issue, GM Martha was notorious for her delicious rice pudding. Here is her recipe courtesy of Carolyn Garbett.

1 c precooked rice,
1 sm. Can evaporated milk,
1 c milk, 4 eggs, 1 c sugar,
2 tsp vanilla, 2 Tbs. cornstarch flour, dash nutmeg, optional 1
c raisins. Mix; bake in Pyrex cake pan at 375 deg for 30 minutes or a touch longer. Yum-O! Thanks GM Martha!

Weaver's Note: ! What a treat – I made with brown rice and arrowroot /rice flower. Perfect subs for special needs.

Initiation and Vision

By Taylor Michael Flournoy

I was mesmerized. Unsure, but open to whatever came. The entrance into the circle, the smudging, the healing power of the music, and the warm embrace of love transformed me instantly as I was immersed into the Grandmothers' rhythm of life. My spirit came fluttering out with tears like dew from a morning's mist. I

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allowed myself to feel Spirit again and was usher-ed into a peace I had been search-ing for. How could I have turned my back on my true spirit for so long, missing this vital dimension of living?

As I opened my mind and ac-cepted the synchronistic events crossing my path, I began to focus on the concept of universal love, and its manifestation at the Gather-ing. Within my small circle, I was able to share my concern with my upcoming career pursuits and my true passion for producing docu-mentaries. I was met with over-whelming enthusiasm and support to follow my heart. As I observed Grandmother ceremonies, relishing the moments when rituals became sacred conduits to my inner peace, I pondered the idea of the Council of Grandmothers being the focus of a documentary on the wisdom of our elders and a community liv-ing in harmony through the prac-tice of walking with spirit, walking in love. Not only does the Council communally heal those who are involved, but through the healing process, I believe it contributes universally to purifying the earth as a whole through raising con-sciousness to a higher level - one that acknowledges the spirit and the connection between all living things; one that respects Mother

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Earth, with sustainable solutions to wildlife and ecological conser-vation.

Since the Gathering, I have plun-ged into getting familiar with the history of the Council of Grand-mothers and read most of the COG newsletters kindly loaned to me by Terry Bourne. I have immersed myself into reading books on aging mindfully, elder wisdom, and Na-tive American teachings. In re-searching these topics, I found several documentaries produced on similar topics, and I am inspired by the level of acceptance and enthu-siasm they have been met with. My hope is that this project will inspire others to seek a relationship with Spirit, and to raise awareness of the practice of Circling and how it is teaching us to take our place in the natural order, promoting peace on earth and within each one of us.

In viewing Connie Spittler's films produced over a decade ago, I would love to build on the *Wise Women Video Series*. Through your journeys, many of you have extraordinary insights into human nature. I appeal to your storytell-ing sensibilities.

I desire to hear recounts of your memories of the Council of Grand-mothers Gatherings and would very much appreciate collaborating with each of you on how this docu-mentary can have the greatest im-pact. If you would like to contri-bute your story, please contact me to make arrangements. Call me (614) 935-3920 or-email me at akasalove@hotmail.com.

Weaver Editor's note: For those of you who don't know her, Taylor is the 30-year-old grandmother who attended the Gulf Coast Gathering in February. As I read her words here, I am reminded of my own 30-year-old self who first encountered the Arizona Grandmothers 10 yrs. ago. I can identify with Taylor's sense of peace and freedom to let her Spirit be touched by the awe-some power of women relating in acceptance, love, and support of each other. A Gathering is the most loving place I've ever been. While most of you relate to each other as peers, to us, you are our beautiful mothers. The light of your spirits illuminate the paths we too will walk; you show us the way without even knowing it. We are grateful to be accepted into your Circle and privileged to hear your stories. Namaste. —Eleanor Gallgher



Comings and Goings

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.



Weaver's Note: The intention of this column sharing information re-guarding the whereabouts of Grand-mothers, events or general happen-ings. If you have something to share, send to B Campbell, 735 W Annandale Way, Oro Valley, 8573 OR email, tobluechablis@comcast.net OR better yet, call me, (520) 572-1470 – I so love talking to Grandmothers!

Here's the latest:

GM Allegra moved to Cochise Stronghold; mailing address re-mains P.O. Box 396, Dragoon, AZ 85609; phone 520-826-8888.

E-mail to be posted at later date.

GM JudyO is teaching Water Fit-ness Classes at Y – you go girl!

GM Marion Sinclair arrived Tucson area July, driving self from **JudyO's**; now house sitting in Bis-bee.CF 650-863-1252. Believe in-tention is to remain in area until AZ Gathering.

GM Willow Elliot passed through Tucson assisting a Mexican Na-tional woman make her way from Oregon to border; it was a great honor to provide a night's shelter and meal to two very road weary women making their way South. Enriching experience. What a net-work we have. Bless Willow. **Also note: Willow** has new address: 19330 NW Gillihan Road, Port-land OR 97231; "I moved out to a precious 'river island' sanctuary for wildlife and wild women, Sauvie Island!"

GM Heide Austin, who was close to GM Sylvia Wallulatum of Warm Springs Tribe (Oregon), now teaching Bisbee HS, felt great need of Native/Hispanic youth, mostly boys, to determine their futures; brought *Peace and Dignity Journey* tradition to Bisbee HS in form of ceremony and celebration. On short notice, **GM Joyce Harvey** and **I (B)** were blessed to at-tend as rep's for the AZ COG's. A most sacred experience. See *You Tube Peace and Dignity Journey 2012* for latest.

GM Jo Wharton continues to be actively involved with Peace-makers Inc.; wonderful *You Tube* presentation on Peace Cranes; see www.cranesflyforpeace.com

GM's B and Robbie Lapp will be attending the August PeerSpirit Circle Practicum on Widbey Island with Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea. And, we both registered without knowing the other was attending – Ahhh! Coyote laughs and plays with us while Spirit leads!

Words of Wisdom from GM Carolyn Garbett: Being in Grandmothers reminds me gowing old is not negative – it is the best time of my life and I savor the moment."



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Who are *The Grandmothers*???

(Or What Did I Get Myself Into?)

By Kit Wilson

Weaver's Note: The following was written by Grandmother Kit for inclusion in the Arizona Council Gathering folder but wanted to share with all.

We begin with a few Riddles:

- ❖ We call ourselves *THE GRANDMOTHERS*, but some of us are *not* biological Grand-mothers.
- ❖ We call ourselves a *Council of Elder Women* but not all of us are old and some of us are still working on being "*Elders*". We don't have rules, but we do have some fiercely held tradi-tions .
- ❖ We are *not* a legal entity of any sort: not an organization, non profit or not-for-profit although we are NOT for Profit.
- ❖ There are no dues or member-ship cards. So there's nothing to *JOIN*.

You get to be a *GRAND-MOTHER* by sitting in a Circle with some of us, or coming to a GATHERING with a lot of us. And you begin to feel you *Belong*. (We're good at making you feel you *Belong*.) Our gathering fees are

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

based solely on the cost of lodging, food, and incidentals. Any extra contributions go toward scholarships. We don't like to turn women away because of money.

In the beginning there were 16 of us. We had a leader whose name was *MARY DIAMOND*. Mary was a visionary and she had a *Very Big Dream*. She heard the Native American saying: *When the Grand-mothers Speak the World Will Heal*. And she said: "I'll bet I can help make that happen."

Mary sent out a call to all the elder women she could think of. She said "Let's form a Council. Come to my place: Cielo En Teirra. In the desert in southern Arizona. Come in October for the week of the Full Moon." Sixteen of us showed up. We sat in a circle. We danced. We sang. We drummed. We wove a tapestry and made poetry. The full moon rose and we watched Her come over the horizon and we created a ceremony for Her coming. *Grand-mother Moon*.

We wrote a letter to the President of the United States. We said "We are a Council of Grand-mothers. We are working on *Speaking Out So the World Will Heal*. That was 1994. And that's how we began.

After that first year synergy took charge. We care a lot about the Earth, so when we say our growing has been Grass Roots, we mean that quite literally. Even when we are in the cities we are deeply rooted in Mother Earth. Here in Arizona we have come together in Council every October since 1994.

More and more women came to the Gatherings and then more Gatherings were birthed: first along the Gulf Coast; then a Council in the Heartland; next a Gathering in England; and one in Texas. Small Circles began using Grandmother Circle principals.

Our newsletter is part of the glue that holds us together. We have modeled ourselves on the ancient ways of Elders all around the world. Sitting in a *Circle*, speaking our truth when we hold the *Talking Piece*, this is one of our Traditions. Early on we decided to use Christina Baldwin's book, *Calling The Circle*, as the blueprint for our *Circles* and use the principals taught by Christina and Ann Linnea.

For our workshops and ceremonies, Grandmothers signing up for a Gathering may propose to lead an event. The presenters must attend the full Gathering to lead an event. Small Circle facilitators are Grandmothers who have experienced our Circles many times and trained themselves more deeply in Circle practices and principals.

We rely on Spirit to guide us. (you'll see how that works.) Our leadership rotates and emerges organically. No elections. No *Roberts Rules of Orders*. Our *Planning Circle* volunteers come together for a year. For the rest, we let Spirit and Chaos Theory, (eg. Confusion precedes integration) do the work. If you don't understand something just ask. (We might not understand it either.) If you are drawn to join us we already love you.

Welcome! Welcome! Welcome,



to the mystery and magic of a Grandmother Gathering. Because you have chosen to join us this year, one more beautiful voice has been added to the healing of the world.



When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

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Report on the June Texoma Gathering

By Nonine Anderson

Our 22 Grandmothers and Grand-mothers-in-waiting that attended Lake Texoma Council in June wove sacred space on an altar pyramid of gold and lavender. Our theme: *Activate the Divine in All Creation* was enhanced with crystal skulls from Beijing to Bra-zil, from Canada to Chili.

To provide additional explanation of the theme, GM Nonine provided the following: *One reason why the pure tones vibrate our body is that we have a natural affinity to quartz. The human body is composed of many crystalline substances – the bones, the blood and the DNA are crystalline in structure as well as the liquid crystal colloidal structure of the brain. – CHICCHAN~and~As you sparkle in the kingdom of forever-ness, and as the crystal of you becomes apparent in your know-ingness and therefore in the know-ingness of all others, you illum-inate yourself. Through that, you illuminate and enlighten all who are about you -ST.GERMAIN~*

For more information, GM Nonine suggests contacting Karen Richard, kmwr@live.com (940)437-8014.



Words of Wisdom from Grandmother Carolyn Garbett, “Sitting in Small Circle has made my spiritual life deeper; it has opened my mind to other things I would never have thought about or considered; small circle is ‘where it’s at!’”

**Farewell Grandmother
Jessie Crosby**



Note: At time of printing, E-mail was received from JudyO that Grandmother Jessie Crosby passed July 30th as and elder of 86 years. There was a memorial service held at St. Francis in the Foothills, 5 PM, Monday, August 3rd, Tucson, AZ. Grandmother Jessie last joined the Arizona Gathering at the COD Ranch, at the age of 77. Remembrances may be sent for the next issue to B. Campbell, E mail bluechablis@comcast.net or 735 W Annandale Way, Oro Valley, AZ 85737

Cloudburst

In the night

rivers rushing

downhill

deepening long wounds

carry soil away.

The mountain weeps:

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

Weeps for water poisoned
land abused.

My heart bursts
cries out

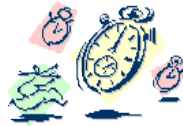
God! What Do We Do!!

Morning Sunshine.
Teardrops on each leaf
Sparkle!

Kit Wilson

Reprinted from "Circle of Grandmothers, Volume 7, Number 3, September 2001; Note: This poem and others came out of the writing workshop at the 2000 Council of Grandmothers. Grandmothers were asked to go outside and observe nature and respond to whatever drew them. There had been a heavy rain the night before and that was what these Grandmothers responded to. Barry Ryan, Workshop Facilitator

TICK TOCK, TICK TOCK



There will only be **three** issues this year, last one expected to be sent by November 30. So PLEASE, observe the bedline! Date for submitting materials for the next issue is **NOVEMBER 1, 2009**. Please attempt to limit articles to approximately **500** words. If your article exceeds this amount, contact me (B) directly. Articles may be sent to : (Preferably e-mail) bluechablis@comcast.net

or mail to: B Campbell, 735 W. Annandale Way, Oro Valley, AZ 85737

If you have read a good book or seen a great DVD and would like to submit a review, these are the guidelines:

- Can you sum up key ideas that stood out most to you?
- What ideas from the book or DVD have worked their way into your thoughts, beliefs understanding?
- Did the book et al change your perspective important things you had forgotten, or what?
- Did you have strong feel-ings while reading or watching?
- What were they, and what ideas triggered them?
- Did it remind you of anything else you have read or seen?
- Can you compare it to another bok or DVD
- Was it easy to read or watch?
- Was it well organized?



When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

WISE WOMEN LIVING IN THE NOW-THANK YOU FOR BEING-THANK YOU FOR BEING VERLIE BARTON

By B Campbell; photographs courtesy of Caroline Kane Krause

Verlie brought from her wardrobe

Weaver's Note: this column was previously know as 'Profiles in Living'

Feed back on change most welcome!

Women gather, sit in circles, and share their life stories. These are as varied as the women represented. Each woman has a unique path leading to her current point in life and that is what seems to matter the most – *Living in the Now*. Grandmother Verlie Barton is a living example of this theory; she experienced early marriage, births, tragic losses- a young daughter, husbands- as well as other life events. Yet, above all those things, Grandmother Verlie serves as a Wise Woman Living in the Now for other Grandmothers and Grandmothers-in-waiting (I borrowed that lovely phrase from GM Nonine) to learn and contemplate the fortitude, strength and energy necessary in our elder years to walk with Spirit. She does not miss a Gathering in Alabama, Texas or Arizona. Her *shtick* is that of Shiley McClain: "I was there, and I was there and I'm still here!"



Flapper Girl Gulf Shores 2009; 'though quite ill, Verlie, pulled self from bed for fun night. That's Verlie!

From Grandmother Robbie Lapp: Some years ago, She-Who-Dances three times a week took me to two dances as I stopped to pick her up to go to a Gulf Coast Gathering.



Purple was made for Verlie and she loves it.

Outfits for about half of our Calendar Girl skits. But I first got to know her deeply through her writing of "THE GRADUATION" in the Circle of Grandmothers Newsletter. She shared in a time when her mother was dying and her granddaughter was graduating from school. I remember that so well. What balance and timing she possessed.

Verlie has a tremendous sense of depth; I learn from her about holding on and letting go. I hope I dance in my living and in my dying with as much gratitude. Many thanks to Verlie. ~

From Grandmother Terry Bourne:

Grandmother Verlie is one of the few GMs that I have ever known to never say negative things about anyone else or the situation. I have more than once seen her at an activity where there was a negative discussion and she would say, "Well, let's just move on, there's work to do." She never gives up and demonstrates this sense of loyalty that I have never witnessed before. She is absolutely loyal to all of the Councils; since attending her first one, however long ago that was, GM Verlie has made every gathering at every Council, to my recollection, since then. She maintains a positive attitude and finds positive in everything. ~

From Grandmother Mae Gable:

Verlie has one of the most adventurous spirits I've ever known. She will motivate you to go as much as you can and to do as you — to live life to its fullest. I just spoke to her yes-terday; she had been out dancing with another Grandmother for her 87th birthday! I have known Verlie since 2001 and have been so impressed with her intense physical activeness regardless of health issues. What a role model. And, she's



great on road trips - a great companion. As one of the Grandmothers. I see her as wise, compassionate, loving, a source of wisdom and an inspiration to those who would look and see. ~

From Grandmother Carolyn Garbett:

BUSY – That's the word for Verlie. She is an absolutely darling woman, has stay-ed in my home and is a great guest. I will for-ever remember her as "December Calendar Girl" – some years ago at the Gulf Coast Gathering when we did calendar girls'skits, Verlie made it a night to remember. Out she came: red high heels, red fish-net stockings, red thong, red bra and red see-through baby doll nighty; she sang a song which I can't even recall. We were all laughing in hysterics. What great legs! Since then, I've called her the December Calendar Girl". As one of the Grandmothers, she exemplifies the kindest soul; she has always been kind and I've never heard Verlie utter a bad word about anyone.

So, Grandmother Verlie, from all the Grandmothers, Thank you for Being!



—**Allegra Ahlquist, Dragoon, AZ**
When I first met Sister Virginia Mary at her house in Dragoon, I saw that shining forehead and clear eyes and there was an instant connection. She became one of the most influential truest friends I have ever known.

I could tell so many miraculous stories but will focus on one area. Sr. Virginia Mary fit right into the Arizona life. We meditated together from the beginning. She loved to come to our land and drum and pray at sundown or sunrise. She met some of the Native Americans and learned how to purify with white sage and yellow pollen. She became the caretaker of the north direction of our giant natural medicine wheel which is carried on now by the Wheaton Franciscans through Sister Alana.

Although Sister Virginia Mary was open to learning about many spiritual traditions, she understood and practiced what is basic to all - love and compassion. She WAS love. She was devotion in the St. Francis way and taught all of us what that means. Thank you, dear Sister Virginia Mary Barta, for being alive in me.

—**Lorraine Norrgard, Cloquet, MN**
I met her and spent the night with her in Arizona the first year I went to the Tucson Gathering. She welcomed me so lovingly and was so very bright and full of light. She powerfully radiated love, kindness, and joy like I had never experienced. Though I did not know her well, I never forgot the brief but

po-
werful moments we shared. I am honored to say that I have re-
Celebration of Life



*Sr. Virginia Mary
Barta*



Sister Virginia Mary Barta, circa 2006

ceived her wooden flute carved in shape of a loon which I play regularly. I feel beautiful inspiration coming through my flute music.



—**Nancy P. Masland, Tucson, AZ**

Sr. Virginia and I had a health issue in common: our lungs were not strong, and we shared a physical healing in Arizona. What a privilege to have known and shared her love of plants, animals, sacred dance and people! Sr. Virginia has had one foot in both worlds since I have known her and epitomizes the spiritual life for all of us: constant contact with Jesus and God, her life a prayer part of our small Grandmother's group, I had many opportunities to witness her selfless serving.

She made us all feel comfortable on this plane as well with her humor, grace, and intelligence. As

the 'Mexicans' who got off the train at her door, needing food, water, and a safe place to stay; the



I met her and spent the night with her in Arizona the first year I went

to the Tucson Gathering. She welcomed me so lovingly and she was so very bright and full of light. She powerfully radiated love copious notes that she took on changes at Vatican II, and her part in changing the process for many women becoming nuns; her modesty in allowing me to help transcribe much of her life into a book now residing in the Wheaton Library. During this writing, I learned of her early years as a preemie in Czechoslovakia, as a Recluse in the Northern woods and as a Provincial for the European and American Franciscan sisters. Her influence is felt by many. It is said that one's life is a gift and even greater one when one passes on to Heaven-- both are true for our loving Sr. Virginia Mary Barta



—**Kit Wilson, Phoenix, AZ**

It is with a mixture of sadness and rejoicing that I share my memories of Sister Virginia Mary Barta and bid her a fond farewell. It is an understatement to say that Sr. Virginia touched lives. She came to Arizona, moved to Dragoon, attended our first Grandmother Gathering at Cielo en Tierra, created a sanctuary in her home, and with

grace, wisdom, and bountiful love opened her heart and invited us in. Sr. Virginia's time in Dragoon was brief when looking at her full life, but her impact on our network of Grandmothers and on me personally was huge. The times we

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shared in her home in the desert, early mornings setting the table and watching the birds, cooking and sharing meals, the meditations she led, the rituals we co-created, the dancing — oh how Sr Virginia loved to dance, even when her feet began to be so painful, the hours when we sat in Circle together. That Circle, nine of us to begin with, eight after Mary Diamond died, was the model for the future small circles that form the core of our Grandmother Gatherings. I believe all of us involved would agree that Sr. Virginia was our spiritual guide.

My friends Christina and Ann said to me one time, knowing my love for Sr Virginia, "She's as close to a Saint as anyone we've ever met." And that's how I felt about her too. I am grateful to have had her in my life — as a friend and as a spiritual mentor.



—Gracie Rogers, Wheaton, IL

I came to know her in her last years, no longer walking unaided and beginning to lose her sight. I read to her, helped her do her work; she dictated and I wrote letters and cards, kept her calendar updated with all the community comings and goings, cleaned out closets and drawers so she could pass on things to others that she

longer needed, watered her flowers, fixed her vegetarian dinners and stored them in the freezer. All the while, week after week, month after month we shared -our beliefs and feelings about everything - about God, and service, and loving kindness. She answered my curious questions and challenged me to grow spiritually. She lived every moment, in the moment. She was my friend.

Even though my time with her was short and near the end of her life journey, I knew almost from our first visit that, while I was there to be her extra arms and legs, my true reason for being with her was simply to love her. And, I did. I held her and hugged her and told her about the birth of my grandchildren. I told her funny stories and we laughed together. She loved to laugh and she loved to be hugged. Maybe in those last years, my inner Spirit child and her inner Spirit child played together.

When I check in, my life feels different since Sr. Virginia left, but I don't miss her because I feel her everywhere - in the bird's singing, in the children's laughter, in the wind that blows through the backyard trees, in the flowers shooting up through the spring warmth. Sr.

Virginia didn't just serve our world, she changed it — forever.



—Connie Spittler, Tucson, AZ

When Mary Diamond planned the first Grandmother Gathering at her ranch Cielo En Tierra, she asked me to interview the 16 women over 60 who'd meet in the high desert outside Sierra Vista, AZ. Entitled, "Grandmothers Speak: Healing The Earth," the tape

became the second in the Wise Women Video Series.

One of the most noteworthy women I met that October, 1994, was Sr. Virginia Barta. I remember her quiet voice making me lean forward as she related information about her youthful history and displayed old photographs. She talked of her calling, profession and accomplishments as a nun and her eventual retreat to the woods to consider her future. "Everyone thought I'd stay two weeks. I stayed seven years. When others came, the Christine Center was built."

Struck by her affinity with the earth, I asked her to walk in the trees nearby and stood in awe as she communed with the leaves and trunks, laying her smooth face against the rough bark. Something in that image made me hold my breath as she connected and melted into nature in front of me. Then, on the grandmother swing of the huge cottonwood tree, she drifted back and forth in an ethereal way, singing softly, "Return again. Return again." The short song ended with "born and reborn again." Her presence touched me to the core, in ways I can't explain.

At the time, I thought that if it is possible to meet an angel, I'd just brushed up against one. When she left us, I turned to Marilyn, the videographer, and said, "When we get back to check this footage, her image may not be there at all. This may have been a mirage."

But it wasn't and Sr. Virginia's sweet face and words "all being is one" remain a high point in the tape.

Through the years, I met with Sr. Virginia on a few other occasions. I know there were many sides to her as she faced the light and the dark, but every time I experienced

her gentle hug of greeting or held her hand in goodbye, I wondered again if I were brushing against a saint. All I know is that meeting her was a blessing.



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Sister Virginia Walks

By Shirley Tassencourt, 1999

Before she came there were no berries heavy on the fence, grapes swelling on their arbor
eggplant, chard and cabbage in the growing bins,
no birds lined up for seed turns or were there
ruby hummers at the ready.

Before Sister Virginia Mary Barta came there were no bird chicks, big eyes and

bigger beaks surfacing over rims of nests tucked up and down the porch eaves; no trees pruned and fruiting - the roses were

returning to their wild. No Saint Francis offered water to a thirsting world. Here was no pale-green-house for spring starters, no cairn of rocks invisibly inscribed, (Mani Padme Ohm).

Before Sister Virginia came there was no Le Celle - that monument to Francis' labor. Looking to the mountains and Beyond, the domed cave leaves clues for those who hunger after spirit.

Certainly there was no soup kitchen for the two leggeds passing through, legal and illegal alike. And who watered the flowers, greeted the nature spirits and hugged the white dog; who invited the neighbors and their neighbors?

Sister Virginia Mary Barta like a thousand armed Shiva cast letters out into the world and collected such every day. Her kitchen table became a holy spot, a sharing of "good and new",
upsets allowed and deep one on one counseling.
Alter inferiori becomes alter superiori. In Zen temple, "cook most enlightened".

Early Sunday morning she laid zafus

and zabutans in orderly fashion. Candle, flower and chimes made it a proper place to meet the One within, whatever your persuasion.

In that room she asked them to sing to her, the 35 wet hungry exhausted Mexican illegals. Then on request she sang to them, the Saint Francis prayer. Seventy black eyes were motionless as the clear high pure heartones dissolved the fear. On the day she moved a five foot gopher snake came in the room and sat in a chair. We are not surprised.

Like Johnny Appleseed she gathers goodness to her and plants it into the earth she inhabits, then moves on. She's done it before, we know about that. Virginia and a near-blind Sister, alone on several hundred acres in Wisconsin, stacking useable lumber in the hollow rib cage of an old barn. Why?
"Couldn't you see this would be the meditation hall?" I call it oversized visioning.
Just like Johnny Appleseed who pulled it off too.

Sister Virginia Mary Barta says "Its time to go inside", and I believe her. She's also done this before; was it seven years in a canvas tent house lightly insulated?
Northern winters neve rmind. Her real shelter the ring of oak trees; no, the ring of devotion and meditation,
no, Himm. Almost like OHMMM, odd.



Mary Diamond and Sr. Virginia Mary Barta, circa 1996

—Marti Beddoe

Over the years, I visited Sr. Virginia weekly. She appointed me her secretary and would dictate her loving responses to the dozens of letters from people all over the world whose lives she had touched. It was such a blessing to be in her presence and to witness, despite her frail and weakening body, her consistent lovingkindness and dignity, her iron will, her spiritual wisdom, her sparkling humor, and her soul-filled listening. Without Sr. VM's nurturance and guidance, I could not have kept the Grandmother Vision alive during the years it took to gather the women who felt called to the Heartland Council of Grandmothers.

Early on, she told me I must "accept and take people where they are." Once I figured out that the first person I had to accept was me, my life slowly transformed,

healed and filled with joy. Her advice helped me grieve my mother's transition and come to peace with my son Matthew's dedication to his military service in Iraq. Often, after telling her of some insight I had regarding my role in creating a particularly painful event, she would throw open her arms, smile widely and say, "You're growing, you're growing." I learned to value the wise way Sr. VM measured and celebrated growth.



(Marti Beddoe teaches and practices of Kriya Yoga meditation and SoulCollage® in Naperville, Illinois. She invites you to visit her visit her web site:

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