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For Submissions: Send to mikerdna@hotmail.com

Editor's Notes



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News of the Groves

Submit your RDNA grove or protogrove news at least 2 weeks before the eight Druid festivals to mikerdna@hotmail.com
Check your grove listing data at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/wheretroves.html>

Mango Mission: News from South-East Asia

Life is busy. Oh, so busy. Another little bundle of joy is coming next week and then life will not be getting any easier. ☺ Ah well. I do so enjoy putting out the Druid Inquirer and the guilty pleasure of reading the RDNA talk conference every week or so when I can squeeze it in. Fortunately, Reformed Druidism has a good momentum and folks generally take care of themselves, low-upkeep religion, so to speak. As I've mentioned before, I'll be leaving La0s in April and in DC for 6 months and then off to the wild northern desolation of Quebec Canada for two years in November 2009.

Tuatha De Danaan Grove: News from California

Hey, Mike! We all got together on top of East Street Park in Hayward and celebrated Samhain in traditional manner Halloween morning; there was much song and rejoicing, and encouragement to do more rituals there. Not sure precisely what we will do for Yule, but we are certainly open for suggestions! People are encouraged to tall the AD what's on their minds at Frpaleph861@yahoo.com.
Yours in the Mother,
Jeffrey

Hazelnut Grove: News from California

Escape from San Jose

In the fullness of time it happened that the Preceptor's heart attacked him, and so he died. The Co-ArchDruid cried and cried, for she loved the Preceptor, and missed him. She also knew that she could not stay in their apartment for it cost much coin of the realm, more than she made in a moon. And it happened that the ArchDruid did need a housemate, and she applied. She was accepted, and so it was arranged. Several hearty strong men of the guild to which she belonged helped her move her belongings, for although she did not have much in coin, she had many belongings, most of them books, for she did sorely love to read, and the books she liked to read were not at the public library.

The strong lords did place her bed and other furniture in her bedchamber. And she and the ArchDruid did spend many days emptying the boxes, and arranging the books on the shelves. Soon she had a farspeaker line of her own, and her computer was online and there was much rejoicing. And they went on emptying boxes for days and days, until she had no more shelves left, and he had run out of nooks and crannies. And still had she more boxes to empty. And there was much rejoicing. For there were two ArchDruids under the same roof with a big back yard with a firepit, which will be a great place to do rituals, once the weather turned balmy again. All they needed was for people to contact them and tell them that they wanted to be in the Hazelnut physical grove.

And it happened that the Co-ArchDruid did attend the Samhain ritual of the ADF. And she was sore impressed. And the next day she joined. And the answer came back that she was already a member since 1990. And they laughed and laughed. For Isaac had given her a membership back then and there was much rejoicing. Because there were now two ArchDruids under the same roof, there could be hairpulls of brown and blonde hair, producing creativity. For they both liked ancient herbal remedies and chocolate and it was traditional to mix the two.

And they did work on their groups. They both had writer's block, but they bounced ideas off each other, and practiced ancient herbal remedies and the ancient martial art of cookie-do. And the ArchDruid had a cat who was 15 shekels of terror, and behold, he was most malleable, and so the ArchDruid called him a silly putty. And there were different variations of writer's block, for she could write blogs, but not stories, and he could not write anything. So during these cold autumn nights, they continued to pump out more groups and more posts.

And she did work with people in the ADF on outside magickal projects. And there was great rejoicing. And she did explore the city on the bus.

Tegwedd ShadowDancer
Co-ArchDruid of the Hazelnut MotherGrove

Koad Protogrove: News from Ohio

Koad Protogrove of Toledo Ohio will be celebrating Yule on Saturday, December 20th. For more information, contact Koad Protogrove at koadprotogrove@yahoo.com

Yours in the Mother,
Jean/Phagos

Clan of Triplehorses Protogrove: News from Oregon

Clan of the Triplehorses Grove in Medford, Oregon USA extends an invitation to all to our Hogmanay (Scottish New Year) ritual to be on Saturday, January 3. Bring a candle for mediation/prayer purposes.

Solstice blessings to all and all you love,
Aigeann
Triplehorses@gmail.com

Poison Oak Grove: News from California

Sister Stacey has recently started a Druid Blog at <http://poisonoakgrove.blogspot.com/>

MOCC/RDNA Grove of Seattle: News from Washington

Brother Daniel has emerged from long hibernation and seeking to establish a grove again in the region.

Carleton Grove: News from Minnesota

The other Brother Daniel says Carleton is happily on break, things going well, more news later.

News from Other Druid Groups

Order of the White Oak (ODO): News from Massachusetts

AODA Ancient Order of Druids



An AODA member in Massachusetts found a curious Druid button (see attached image) at a used-junk vendor's booth. I haven't been able to identify its source, nor has Philip Carr-Gomm. Would it be possible to put the image into the next issue of the Druid Inquirer, on the off chance that somebody on the mailing list knows something about it?

Yours in the Mother,
JMG



Meet a Reformed Druid: John Michael Greer

Who are you?

I was born and raised in the Puget Sound country of Washington State, found trees and books more congenial than people for most of my childhood, found my way into occultism as a teenager, and never looked back. I first found my way onto the Druid path by way of an OBOD seed group in Seattle in 1993, was involved in ADF for a few years just after the turn of the millennium, then stumbled across a nearly defunct Druid order, the Ancient Order of Druids in America, in 2003 and found myself elected its Grand Archdruid before I'd quite figured out what was happening. Since every Druid tradition I've ever studied has brought me much of value, I jumped at the chance to receive First Order initiation from Stephen Abbott in 2005; Second Order followed the next year, and Third Order this autumn.

Where and when vigiled?

The night of September 20-21 in a backyard in a Sacramento suburb. The thing I recall most intensely about my vigil was the contrast between the never-quite-broken noise and bustle of the suburban setting -- someone was having a party half a dozen blocks away, cars drove by, chickens clucked nearby and some distant coyotes kept indicating their intentions toward the chickens -- and the slow silent turning of the sky.

What your grove plans are?

Planning on founding one next spring.

Publicly releasable contact information.

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Some Publications:

<http://thearchdruidreport.blogspot.com/>

Paths of Wisdom: Cabala in the Western Tradition (Llewellyn, 1996)

Circles of Power: Ritual Magic in the Western Tradition (Llewellyn, 1997)

Inside A Magical Lodge (Llewellyn, 1998)

Earth Divination, Earth Magic: A Practical Guide to Geomancy (Llewellyn, 1999)

Natural Magic (Llewellyn, 2000; reprinted as *The Encyclopedia of Natural Magic*, 2005)

Monsters (Llewellyn, 2001)

The New Encyclopedia of the Occult (Llewellyn, 2003)

Learning High Magic, with Carl Hood Jr. and Clare Vaughn (Weiser, 2004)

A World Full of Gods: An Inquiry into Polytheism (ADF Press, 2005)

The Academy of the Sword by Gerard Thibault (translation; Chivalry Bookshelf, 2005)

Druidry: A Green Way of Wisdom (Weiser, 2006)

The Element Encyclopedia of Secret Societies (Element, 2006)

HEALTH CORNER



Don't Worry, Be Happy

By Mary-Russell Roberson '86 *is a science writer who lives in Durham, North Carolina.*

Carleton College Voice, Fall 2008

With all the doom and gloom in the world today, it's hard not to be negative. Psychology professor and researcher Barbara Fredrickson '86 shines a new light on the power of positive emotions.

What does it mean to flourish? Not just to survive, but to thrive? Most people would include good health, creativity, growth, and resilience among their definitions. Whenever someone claims to have found the path to this holy grail, we flock to hear his speeches and buy his books.

Yet research suggests that fewer than 20 percent of U.S. adults today are flourishing. What have they found that the rest of us haven't?

According to Barbara Fredrickson '86, the "fuel" for flourishing is something we all have access to, but few of us know how to tap into: positive emotions. Fredrickson, psychology professor and director of her own laboratory at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, has been researching the purpose of positive emotions for the past 20 years—and her work has led to discoveries that she wants to share with a wider audience. "When I looked at the different things my work was saying, it was coming together to be instructions about life and how to live it," she says. To get her message out, she's written a book, *Positivity: Groundbreaking Research Reveals How to Embrace the Hidden Strength of Positive Emotions, Overcome Negativity, and Thrive*, which will be published by Crown in February 2009.

Fredrickson first became interested in positive emotions partly because they had not received much attention from the scientific community. Scientists had already shown that negative emotions produced specific survival actions. Negative emotions narrow attention and rev up the body to meet an immediate threat. Fear, for example, causes an urge to flee; anger creates an urge to attack; disgust causes the urge to expel or avoid something that may be teeming with germs. Negative emotions also produce measurable physiological changes, such as increases in heart rate and blood pressure, which ready the body for action.

Positive emotions—joy, amusement, gratitude, pride, contentment—don't produce such clear physical changes, nor do they invoke urges to perform specific behaviors. This piqued Fredrickson's interest, as did the fact that no other scientists had begun looking for

the evolutionary advantages of positive emotions. “What appealed to me was the uncharted territory,” she says. “I wanted to study something that no one had ever studied.”

Robert Levenson, Fredrickson’s mentor at the University of California–Berkeley, where she did her postdoctoral work, had proposed that positive emotions might undo the cardiovascular effects of negative emotions. Fredrickson decided to test the idea. She measured heart rate and blood pressure of volunteers, then told them they would have to give a speech that would be videotaped and evaluated. As expected, the heart rate and blood pressure of the volunteers went up. After a few minutes, she told them they didn’t have to give a speech after all. All the subjects immediately watched a short film. Those who watched films designed to elicit amusement or contentment returned more quickly to their baseline physiological measures than those who watched a neutral film. Those who watched a sad film recovered slowest of all.

Too much time spent with a racing heart and elevated blood pressure can contribute to heart disease, so as a recovery tool positive emotions may contribute to health. But Fredrickson wasn’t satisfied that she had uncovered the full story.

“Is this the evolved purpose of positive emotions—that they are a reset button?” she asks. “That would suggest that most of our positive emotions would occur in the context of negative emotions.” Obviously, though, people experience positive emotions in many situations, not just those involving negative emotions. So Fredrickson kept looking.

Some research shows that people feeling positive emotions perform better on tests designed to measure creativity, flexibility, and open-mindedness, although these benefits are just as transitory as the emotions that produce them. But Fredrickson suspected that these transitory states must produce long-term survival advantages—otherwise, why would positive emotions have evolved in the first place? And why would they have remained such a central part of the human experience?

Fredrickson developed a theory that positive emotions open people’s minds to opportunities for building personal resources, such as physical skills, friendships, or knowledge, which in turn help people survive and thrive when life gets tough. Fredrickson calls her theory “broaden and build,” referring to broadened thinking and building personal resources.

While anger spurs people to attack, joy may spur them to go out dancing, make new friends, or learn something new. When the joy wanes, the resources remain. Physical endurance, friendship, and knowledge can help a person survive an illness, a job loss, or another setback. Plus, the effects of positive emotions grow over time, Fredrickson says: “The benefits of positive emotions happen in the future, not just in the moment that you are feeling them.”

Nice idea. But how do you prove it?

Fredrickson started with the “broaden” part of her theory. She and her graduate students used a variety of laboratory experiments to add to the body of research showing that people who are experiencing positive emotions think more creatively and see more possibilities than people experiencing negative emotions. For example, volunteers who watched film clips designed to elicit amusement or contentment made much longer lists in response to the question “What do you feel like doing right now?” than did volunteers who watched films designed to elicit anger, anxiety, or no emotion. They were also more likely to see the big picture on a test that measures global thinking.

Next, Fredrickson wanted to test whether positive emotions led to the development of personal resources. In order to do this, she needed to be able to increase the positive emotions experienced by one group of people over time as compared to a control group. A variety of researchers have shown that meditation increases positive emotions, so Fredrickson enrolled one group of volunteers in a seven-week meditation class and put another group on the waiting list for the class. Before, during, and after the classes, Fredrickson collected daily information from both sets of volunteers about their emotions, 18 different personal resources (including health, social support given and received, and feelings of competence), depressive symptoms, and life satisfaction.

After rigorous analysis of a mountain of data, she and her students discovered that the meditators did experience more positive emotions than the nonmeditators, and that the meditators logged increases in personal resources and in life satisfaction. The results of the study will be published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

Positive emotions aren’t the only way to build personal resources, Fredrickson says—they’re just the most efficient. Sure, an angry person can trudge to the gym, and a frightened person can use techniques from a self-help book to meet new people. But the joyful person who starts a pickup basketball game and the amused person who shares a funny observation with a stranger achieve similar results with a lot less work.

No one’s life can be completely free of negative emotions, Fredrickson points out. However, she says, people who are able to cultivate and savor positive emotions, even in the midst of trouble, have a better chance of thriving. After 9/11, she says, virtually everyone in America felt sadness, fear, and anger. In a study of 100 undergraduates at the University of Michigan, where she used

to teach and have a lab, Fredrickson found that people who also felt positive emotions—such as gratitude, a renewed sense of community, and an intense curiosity about world events—recovered more quickly from the emotional trauma.

“Sometimes it seems like our emotions rain down on us,” she says. “But we have far more control over what we feel than we think we do. Exercising that control is really critical to how our lives unfold.” (See below for tips on being positive.)

Fredrickson, who is married and has two young sons, makes time to meditate daily and savor pleasures small and large. During the bus ride to work, she looks for and enjoys her favorite sights. As she’s leaving a conference, she’ll pause to feel grateful for the experience. And during times of stress and challenge, she consciously notices the silver linings—such as the babysitting and cooking services lovingly offered by neighbors and friends when her husband was in the hospital. “I do look around at everything as a gift,” she says. “That’s not an inner dialogue that I’ve always had with myself, but I think it makes a big difference.”

Colleagues, students, friends, and strangers have told Fredrickson that her research has changed their lives, and their stories inspired her to write for a popular audience.

“I know my research can make a big difference in people’s lives,” Fredrickson says, “and I’m hoping my book will help more people gain that insight and mastery. Positive emotions expand our awareness of the world around us, and it turns out that being able to see the big picture has a lot of positive consequences that help people become the best version of themselves.”

Increasing Your Daily Dose of Positive Emotions

Eat More Ice Cream? Unfortunately, no. For most people, eating ice cream generates pleasure, not positive emotion. Pleasure and positive emotion often come wrapped together—eating ice cream as part of a social gathering—but Fredrickson distinguishes between the two: “Pleasures are triggered more by physical sensations. Positive emotions are triggered more by finding positive meaning in a given circumstance.”

Change the Way You Think Positive emotions can’t be forced, but changes in thinking patterns can. “Just saying ‘I’m going to be happy’ doesn’t do it,” Fredrickson says. To unlock emotions of gratitude, you need to frame things in a positive light. Walking down the street may seem ordinary, she says, “or you can think, ‘Hey, people are smiling. I live in a great town.’” Reframing works for negative events, too. During hard times, appreciate the support of friends and your own resiliency. After a natural disaster, marvel at the goodness of volunteers handing out water and rebuilding homes.

Lose Yourself When you become so involved in a skill, craft, or sport that the whole world goes away, you are experiencing a positive emotional state that psychologists call “flow.” Such activities also generate a sense of accomplishment and well-earned pride.

Go for a Walk—Outside One of Fredrickson’s students at the University of Michigan ran an experiment that showed that people who spent more time outside in beautiful weather experienced more positive emotions.

Stop and Smell the Roses “Most moments in life are at least mildly positive,” Fredrickson says, “but negative things just jump out and scream at you.” Give positive moments their due—train yourself to look for them and appreciate them.

Help Out Research has shown that volunteering or helping other people is a reliable way to generate positive emotions.

Get off the Treadmill A new gadget may make you happy, but not for long. The urge to regain that happiness by purchasing a bigger, better gadget puts you on the “hedonic treadmill.” Positive actions also can lose their luster through repetition. “Increase the variety in how you approach things,” Fredrickson says. “Keep things fresh.”

Meditate Research has shown meditation to be a remarkably reliable way to produce positive emotions. What’s more, meditation bypasses the hedonic treadmill, says Fredrickson, because “it’s a new challenge every day.”

Find out more about Frederickson’s research at <http://www.PositiveEmotions.org>



A Druid Looks At Thirty

Irony Sade, 5-17-08

I feel like an odd sort of druid at present. All of my time goes to my medical training and my family. My only down-time is during the long commute to Syracuse for school. We have not had a gathering in over a year, and I am not sure who would come now, if I called one. I still think about the world from the perspective on one who venerates nature, and I live as best I can to support the earth, but my time is so limited... The trappings of druidry escape me, I scarcely celebrate the holidays, rarely play the harp, and while I study nature daily, it is the particularly human nature of physiology and disease. Am I still a druid? I think of the old druids sometimes, those priests, scholars, healers, judges, poets of their day. Was their life less lonely? Was their role more clear? Did they specialize, as it seems we must, so that one was more poet than judge, another more healer than bard?

If a man venerates the earth in his mind, speaks out against injustice where he sees it, shares his knowledge of the natural world, its people, and their cultures with those who would otherwise damage them through ignorance; if he venerates the human soul, while remembering that he knows precious little about it; if he advocates courage to his colleagues in despair, and challenges them never to make decisions out of fear; if he honors the gods of other cultures, while gently reminding those who do not that theirs is not the only way; if he loves mystery, and music, and magic in the world: if he does all that, and yet celebrates no holiday, and tells no one he is a druid, what are we to make of him? Has that man left the path of Druidry? Is that man worth being? If such a man doubts the worth of his works, should we agree, sympathize, or call him insane?

Bonewits once wrote: "The role of the Druid has always been clear- scholar, and artist, poet, and priest, philosopher and magician- the one who seeks, preserves and expends the highest wisdom her or his people are capable of handling safely, and who uses the knowledge and inspiration for the benefit of their community."

Is that enough? Is that as high as we can aim? Or is that too much to expect of a lonely practitioner in an uncaring world?

Druidism offers no answers, no commandments, only questions. At the moment, those are mine. I offer them to you.



Missionary Impossible: File 8

A Druid Looks at 38

By Mike the Fool

It seems hard to believe, but it's been 15 years since I've become a Third Order Priest in 1993 (graduated in 1994 due to scheduling problems.) My revival of Reformed Druidism at Carleton (1992-2008) has amazingly lasted as long as the original period at Carleton (1963-1979), and now I feel like "an old timer".

Yet I still feel young and inspired in my heart. I no longer have time for regular services at my current post, but I manage to snatch sacred moments every other day, and like the article "Don't worry, Be happy" suggests, I need to meditate regularly again. There are untapped academic areas that beckon to me despite (or because of) 21 years of formal education. I still long to take a meteorology class, more botanical study, an actual philosophy course. Yet they will not get their due for years to come.

I've spawned another generation in my "bean-pole" family tree, much to the relief of my parents, and now I have far less "free time" than I could ever imagine, but I don't

begrudge it. I suppose some people in nursing homes are bored silly with more time than they know what to do with, but the rest of us are frenzied in this modern age. So it is.

Big old 40 is coming up soon, and I wish I could grow a nice Druidic gray beard, but the patchy nature of my beard (like my studies) forbids this. Thanks to Japanese diet and exercise, some folks think I look 30 (thank you, folks) but day by day, the little aches and pains are increasing. While walking around the track at the Ambassador's house, I saw the old chin-up bar and told my son to watch Daddy. Well, I did one, and gosh darn it, I did a second one, but my frame was shaking like a leaf to do it. "Back in the good ole days", I might have done 8 or 9 (13 was my record), but I was 30 pound lighter and light-years fitter. I guess knowing one's limits is part of aging gracefully.

As 2008 comes to a close, I marvel at the ability of the Americans to embrace change and renew its pledge to diversity and possibility. The folks overseas were just as enthusiastic out here as the young folks in the Mississippi voting lines. The sun always rises in the morning, and every four years, we have a new chance to chart a new course. Who knows where this next journey will go to.

As for my journey, I will transit from the hot and steamy tropics of LaOs to the cold and frigid pains of Montreal in 2009. I welcome the return of four changing seasons, oak trees and fast food. I hope to meet up with some Reformed Druids in Quebec, such as Sebastien, who have been too far away for two years.

Perhaps, perhaps, I might even get a chance to visit Carleton College (6 years gone now) and renew my contact with the second most sacred spot in the world to me, the first being wherever I happen to be at that moment, since that is all I have to work with. You do what you can with what you got, rather than what you wish you had and where you want to be.



A Personal Inventory for Leaders

by Todd Covert of ADF
Used with Permission

While I've never personally been involved in a so-called "12 Step" program of recovery, I've always felt that there are valuable life lessons to be found within the steps. For leaders of groups like ADF Groves and Protogroves, the fourth step can be extremely valuable to undertake:

"We have made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

Notice that there is no counsel to catalog the moral failings of others. Notice, too, that there is no limitation to listing only one's moral shortcomings and ignoring one's strengths. But the exercise of examining one's own accountability for the situation one finds oneself in can be tremendously important for a leader, especially when faced with the difficult task of considering disciplinary action against a member.

One of the biggest factors in contributing to conflict within a Grove...and, in my experience, most generally neglected...is the leader's own contributions to the antagonistic behavior. The majority of the time, antagonists are antagonists and are going to disrupt any group they are in. However, sometimes, unfortunately, defensiveness or just simple misplaced pride on the part of a leader can create frustration and division. A good leader—in my opinion and in my experience—needs to do the *very* difficult work of *first* asking him or herself (and other trusted members, if possible) what she or he might be contributing to the situation.

It can be very easy to decide, especially in a small group, that you have an irrational malcontent on your hands...because...see?...no one else is complaining...when what you actually have is one candid person and five people who also have issues with your leadership style but don't want to hurt your feelings (because you founded the group/do most of the work/contribute so much money/etc./etc.). The

unreflective leader will not be capable of distinguishing between a malcontent and a passionate critic who may actually be making points that need to be heard.

None of that is hypothetical: I've seen it in action, including in ADF. And why shouldn't it happen? Particularly because ADF does not offer systematic training to prospective leaders, it is very important that Grove or Protogrove leaders take real responsibility to check in with themselves—in a fearless and truly searching manner—as well as with other members and be willing to take constructive criticism in an open and non-defensive manner. That is often *very* difficult for the sorts of individuals drawn to leadership...it takes a lot of self-discipline and generally an ability to suppress exactly the sort of confident ego a leader needs to have.

The following are some suggestions drawn from personal experience of some things leaders might check in with themselves from time-to-time, **especially** before passing judgment on a "disruptive member":

1. What purpose does leadership serve in my life? What do I think "leadership" means generally? Have I thought about that? Why did I found the group (or seek my office)? Do I crave attention? Do I strive to put the needs of the group (as I see them and as expressed in founding documents) ahead of my needs when I feel like they are in conflict? Do I feel I'm in the office because no one else would take it on? Do I feel "miscast" in the office at all?
2. What skills do I feel I bring to leadership? What makes me consider myself a leader? If asked...say in an interview with the media...what evidence from education or professional experience would I cite to document those skills? What skills do I feel I lack? What have I done to work on acquiring those lacking skills? Have I asked any trusted members for **honest**, uncensored, feedback on my leadership abilities and style? Do I feel anyone can be a leader? If so, what has led me to think that?
3. How do I lead? How do I recognize when consensus is forming? Am I capable of forging compromise? Do I **enjoy** forging compromise? Do I dictate? Do I vacillate? Do I pontificate? Do I have a hard time keeping a meeting orderly? Do I feel like meetings become too high-spirited and I can't be heard? Do meetings run longer than I'd like them to? Do I provide an agenda for meetings? Do I **follow** an agenda for meetings? Am I reluctant to say, "We need to move on"? If some members don't want to move on in a meeting, how do I handle that (or imagine I would handle that)? Do events begin on time? How do I provide notice of events? Has anyone ever complained that s/he wasn't informed of something?
4. If my group isn't growing at all, what reasons might there be? Have we settled into being a clique that doesn't welcome newcomers well? If I hug members in a public setting, does that extend to only *some* members? Do I identify a member in the group as my "best friend" to others? Do I play favorites? Do I make equal time for all who approach me about membership or at least have a system so that all who approach can be directed to the same member or group of members for answers?
5. Do I make an effort to identify potential problem individuals *before* they enter membership? What do I do when I encounter a person who makes me ill at ease who wants membership? Does the group have any filters in place? Can I get along with people whose personality or lifestyle choices make me uncomfortable? How do I tend to deal with those sorts of individuals in social settings? Do I do the same things in the Grove/Protogrove? *Should* I do the same things in the Grove/Protogrove?
6. If my group is growing rapidly, do I have a plan for responding to growth? What are the core principles I expect all members to affirm? When was the last time I actually explained them to someone? How do I articulate those to *all* newcomers? (*Do I articulate them to all newcomers?*) Is there a fair and objective system in place for newcomers to advance in rank...if there is rank in the group? If there isn't a formal advancement or training system, on what basis do I decide whom I ask for advice and whom I don't among the members? Do I just work with elected officers of the group or is there an informal "inner circle"? If challenged by a member saying the group had an "inner circle" or "ruling faction" that *seemed* closed to newcomers, how would I respond?

7. How are decisions made in the group? How many decisions have I made in the last month without asking for consent from any other officer or member? The last year? If asked how the decision-making process was arrived at, what source would I identify? Another group's bylaws? Intuition? Formal leadership training? Experience in another group? If experience in another group: Why do I believe that group's structure or culture lines up with the culture and needs of my *current* group? Am I trying to force the other members into a mold into which they don't really fit? Am I honestly following the example(s) of a role model in building structure for the group or am I trying to be someone I'm not?
8. Do I criticize others publicly? To what ends have I criticized others in the group publicly? Have I been criticized publicly? How did that feel? Was I able to experience hurt feelings without rejecting the *content* of the criticism out-of-hand? Have I ever said to a fellow member, "Thank you, I didn't know I was doing that"? Have I ever shouted at a fellow member? Was I embarrassed afterwards? Did I apologize? Or do I still feel it was justified? Do I feel **they** owed me an apology for prompting my anger?
9. Do I feel unappreciated? If so, why? Who have I spoken to about that feeling? Do I feel I'm getting more criticism as a leader than I thought I would when I founded the group/accepted the office?
10. Do I delegate enough work? Am I playing martyr by hanging onto enough work for the group that I can always appear overworked? Do I ever justify failing to follow through on a promise to the group or meet a deadline by saying "I had too many other things on my plate?" Was I being sincere if I said that? Why do I allow myself to have so much on my plate that things aren't done as well as I might like? As others might like?
11. Am I planning for the future? Do other members have a sense of what those plans might be? Do I engage in active long-range planning with the membership? If I were to be hit by a bus tomorrow, would the group survive? Do I have information that would be lost if I left the group?
12. Whom do I think the group serves? The members? A larger community? Both? How does my group define membership? Where **exactly** is that definition to be found?
13. If someone who belongs to a minority subset of the group asks for accommodation for his/her practices or interests, how do I respond (or imagine I would respond)?
14. How much does my group communicate by e-mail? How many of the interpersonal conflicts I see within the group originated in e-mail communication? Do I use e-mail as a substitute for face-to-face communication? Have I educated myself as to the shortcomings of e-mail? Am I facilitating as much face-to-face interaction as possible? Have I ever disciplined or reprimanded a member by e-mail? Have I done so on a list? Am I more comfortable...do I feel more articulate...in e-mail than face-to-face communication? Why?
15. Do I ever feel intimidated when other members come up with ideas I wish I'd thought of? Do I ever nitpick those ideas? Have I ever rejected another's idea out-of-hand without explanation? Do I consider myself an "alpha" type? If so, how do I react when another "alpha" comes into the group (or any other setting where I'm in leadership)? Do I make conscious efforts to find productive roles for other assertive and/or creative personalities in the group? Do I ever marginalize such individuals? Has anyone ever told me they'd like more to do in the group? How did I respond?

I've had to ask myself virtually *all* of the above questions during my tenure as first Grove Organizer and then Senior Druid. Many of them I have had to ask repeatedly. Maybe we've been lucky, but in almost five years of existence and with well over fifty people having come through Grove membership during that time, we've had exactly one serious confrontation and have *never* had to discipline anyone (apart from one formal warning). I don't believe that is an accident—and I can honestly say I've seen us avoid problems other groups have fallen into through hard work and ongoing planning.

I believe that some Protogroves in smaller communities have a higher likelihood of encountering disruptive members because there may be a limited number of visible Pagan groups in the area and it is

a truism that Paganism has an attraction for marginalized personalities. (This is what I call the lure of the "archetype of the empowered outsider" and it is endemic...and can be both valuable and toxic...in Neopaganism.) Also there is a greater likelihood of needing to accommodate to various interests in the group (cultural or otherwise) in places where Pagans are thin on the ground. But I've seen groups in major metropolitan areas with plenty of choices of paths run into problems with disgruntled members, so I think it's important to resist the temptation to say that it is a given that we will be beset with antagonists for particular reasons...and, more importantly, in my opinion, to assume too readily the way to deal with antagonists is *automatically* to show them the door.

It is critically important to do *very* serious self-reflection...and often reflection within the "core" membership of the group...before asking someone to leave what they have identified as their spiritual fellowship. Once you are clear about your own contributions to a conflict, if you still feel someone needs to be asked to leave, it is a much healthier place to be and you will have more resolve to carry through on the action. A leader should never be afraid to confront a truly disruptive individual who threatens the well being of the group and coming from a place of clarity as to one's own place in the conflict is an important step in facilitating this.



Defining the Spirit of Reformed Druidism

Author: El Arseneau

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A Reformed Druid is one who simply believes that "Nature is good." Now, we get into trouble as soon as we use the word "believes." Other words or phrases like, "adheres to the idea of" or "leans in the direction of the idea that" or "subscribes to the ideal that," may well be more accurate, but the bottom line is basically the idea that one's spirituality can be found and based upon the manifestations of nature.

"Nature is good," therefore, is the first characteristic of the Reformed Druid. Beyond that anything goes. No, really, anything goes. This is because of the whole history of the movement. The first Reformed Druids came together because of a rule at Carelton College in Minnesota that required attendance at religious services. The rule was broad enough that this group of precocious students decided to bend the rule for their own purposes. In that bending, the Reformed Druid movement was born.

So, the second characteristic of Reformed Druids is that "they bend or remake the rules to suit themselves."

Historically, Reformed Druids have avoided a lot of formal organization. The vast majority of them are solitary practitioners. A few hundred are gathered in small congregations, called Groves, of three or more individuals. The original group, the Reformed Druids of North America, has no central headquarters, no national organizational structure, no one to legislate rules. In fact, local Groves make up their own rules and traditions as they go along. To be sure, there are some traditions, an order of worship, and other loose rules, that many Groves abide by, but it's all optional - there is no central body (anymore anyway) around to assure that every organization within the Reformed Druid movement follows exactly the same path.

A few larger groups within the Reform have a more pronounced structure, but even these larger more organized groups are self-defined, and they pretty much do what they want to, or just simply "make it up as they go."

That's the third characteristic of a Reformed Druid: one who makes it up as s/he goes - and decides for himself what traditions, or none, s/he will follow.

Now to be sure, there are a few groups out there who attempt to define a Reformed Druid based upon their own agenda. Usually these definitions crop up in attempts to point out how this group or that group isn't of the Reform, but such exercises are anti-Druidic, since they violate the very principles the Reform was founded upon. Even this essay I am writing now, violates those principles, so I am attempting to thread carefully here, knowing that I walk upon a steep, slippery, winding, twisting, road with deep chasms on either side.

The best that can be said then, for Reformed Druids collectively, is that they are largely, *"a non-prophet, ir-religious, dis-organization."*

Anyone can be a Reformed Druid. "How do I join?" "You just did!" affirms Michael Scharding on his popular [website](#) that explores all things Reformed Druidic. The simple matter of affirming that *"Nature is good,"* allows you to enter into the fellowship of Reformed Druidry. After that, you have a lot of choices, or none, depending on your own desires and comfort level. Groups can also join the Reform en masse -

there's no rule against it anywhere in [A Reformed Druid Anthology \(ARDA\)](#) (a collection of Reformed Druid documents, traditions essays, etc. - some of which are mutually exclusive and/or contradictory - maintained by Druid Scharding).

Schisms are aplenty within the Reform, usually precipitated by arguments over the ARDA (and some Druids just love to argue). The best way to avoid such fights is to simply not participate. Since there's no authority, no "Council of Dalon ap Landou", such arguments carry no real weight anyway. Ignore your detractors and do whatever the hell you want - your word is as good as anyone's.

No one can kick you out of the Reform. Leaving is your decision and yours alone. Likewise you are free to form any group you wish, no one can stop you. So long as "Nature is good" (or groovy, or wonderful, or some other adjective for goodness) you can do whatever you want - you are still a Reformed Druid.

You don't have to be Celtic, you don't have to be Neo-Pagan (the RDNA traditionally allows you to be a practicing Catholic, Buddhist, Jew, Fundy, anything, and maintain your status as a Druid). (Note: Other groups within the Reform do have some "have to's" and "can't be's", but traditional Reformed Druidism eschews all that).

I believe that there are a lot of Reformed Druids who do not even know they are Reformed Druids. I would be a good example. Since the late '60s, my own personal spirituality has been nature oriented.

At first I thought I was simply, a witch, but in actually researching Witchcraft and Wicca, found the pieces didn't all fit. There were too many requirements. Rosicrucianism likewise was too cumbersome, and neo-Paganism was too broad an umbrella.

I briefly belonged to the [Church of All Worlds](#) (CAW), but found they had their own issues, and were bogged down in over-organization. I likened a lot of these groups to tables: very beautiful and ingeniously designed and organized, but, unlike the tree they were crafted from, they were dead. It's better to have organism (and multiple orgasms!) than to have organization. It was in the late summer of 1995 that I met my first Reformed Druid, at the unlikely venue of a "New Age Renaissance Faire" in San Jose CA. He kind of gave me a brief overview of what Reformed Druidism was all about. That and subsequent research into the Reform, eventually led me to declare myself a Reformed Druid.

I'm a people person. I don't personally function well as a solitary, so after searching locally (at the time I was living in Santa Cruz CA) and not finding anyone, a CAW friend of mine and I dreamed up the [Order of the Mithril Star](#), and loosely based it on a melding of CAW and Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA). To be sure much of it is our own interpretation, and that interpretation has itself evolved and morphed over the years.

My wife, who served as Archdruid of OMS for the past five years, had another, broader vision. Why not Reformed Druidism for everyone? Why limit this simple, but elegant spirituality to North Americans? Why shouldn't we offer this to the whole world? OMS already had members in eight countries and the RDNA reportedly had Groves in Japan! There was an obvious need for an international expression of the Reform.

So, in the autumn of 2006 at the 1st Annual West Coast Gathering of the Reformed Druids, the [Reformed Druids of Gaia](#) was born. The RDG is currently the most accurate reflection of what Reformed Druidry is all about. I think probably more so than any of the RDNA schisms, and maybe more so than the RDNA itself (however this would be hard to nail down, as each Grove and Order within the Reform is an autonomous entity, each doing it's own thing). Did I just say that? I am surely in trouble now!

Well, you can't please everyone can you?

And, why do you have to?

Most of us left our parents' religions (in my case the two most guilt-ridden of the major faiths) because we wanted to get beyond all the rules: the mores, the dietary laws, the have to's and can't do's. Reformed Druidry promises a better way - a spirituality defined by your own ideals, and elastic enough to adapt as your ideals morph and evolve.

If we wanted a lot of *"have to's," "can't do's",* and *"this is the way it HAS to be done's,"* we could have all saved ourselves a lot of trouble and we would have been better off staying in our parents' religions.

The ancient Druids, of course, made it all up (didn't everyone?). They invented their Gods and Goddesses, their rites, and their philosophy. They conjured up what some today refer to as *Druidism* (but which probably had a different name entirely) to meet the spiritual needs of the people they were serving in the times they were serving them in.

We Reformed Druids are simply doing the very same thing as the ancients: *"We're doing religion the old fashioned way: we're making it up as we go!"*

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What are the Basic Tenets?

By Mike the Fool

Think of the “Great World Religions”, each of them have their critical self-defining collections of principles; the 10 Commandments, the 5 pillars of Islam, the 4 Fold Noble Truth and 8 Fold Path of Buddhism, etc. The only thing comparable amongst the Reformed Druids are the 2 Basic Tenets (and less arguably the Foundation of the Fundamentals, but that’s really a stretch).

Considering how little is officially tying together the Reformed Druids, it is surprising how few Druids can actually recite the two short Basic Tenets by heart. What usually comes out is a paraphrase, often very interesting itself, or the quick and simple, “Nature is Good”, twice repeated. I like to think of that as one of the charming characteristics of the RDNA, not knowing what the heck one is doing, or how one got there. But sadly, I’m a historian, and I’ve got to know the answer, and I thought I knew when I got started, but a brief review of early documents show some surprising variations. Such it is with Druidism, the more you know, the more you realize you don’t know very much at all. This long article talks about what I found out.

We know from interviews, that Howard Cherniack, the first preceptor, and one of the first three Founders of Reformed Druidism, was the author of the Basic Tenets and devised the first constitution before stepping off the stage following petitioning the Dean of Men for recognition. He did little else, but the flexible skeleton of the RDNA has proved remarkably adaptable over the years, while Fisher’s ritualism, Nelson’s fraternalism and Frangquist’s mysticism fleshed out a very interesting and influential creature in the annals of modern religious movements. All done by, for and with amateurs.

Poetic Chronicles Version:

David Franquist’s seminal work, *The Druid Chronicles* was published in the spring of 1964 and his poetic phrasing of the Basic Tenets is probably the most often quoted from the Book of Law, which upon inspection appears to be a rewording of a now-lost copy of the 1963 Constitution. Frangquist’s works are notoriously difficult to understand, mostly due to oververbosity and a very successful attempt to immitate the English of the King James Bible.

3. And it came to be revealed that any person could become a member of them;^b but any who would become a member would be first required to submit humbly a petition, which petition is a declaration of their subscribing to the Basic Tenets. And this petition may be written with the pen, or it may be spoken aloud with the mouth.*
4. Now the Basic Tenets of Reformed Druidism are these:
5. **The object of the search for religious truth, which is a universal and a never-ending search, may be found through the Earth-mother, which is Nature; but this is one way, yea, one way among many.**
6. **And great is the importance, which is of a spiritual importance, of Nature, which is the Earth-mother; for it is one of the objects of Creation, and with it men do live, yea, even as they do struggle through life are they come face to face with it.***

There is a lot of points packed into his version, which I will describe at the end of the article. The Song of the Earth mini-hymnal, released in 1964, lists the Chronicle version.

1965 Recruitment Pamphlet Version:

The 1965 recruiting pamphlet by Frangquist, What is Reformed Druidism, lists:

Principles

Druidism boasts its lack of institutionalized dogma. Each Druid is required only to adopt these Basic Tenets:

(1) One of the many ways in which the object of Man's search for religious truth can be found is through Nature: the Earth-Mother.

(2) Nature, being one of the primary concerns in Man's life and struggle, and being one of the objects of creation, is important to Man's spiritual quests. (The phrase "objects of creation" does not necessarily imply a single Creator, but it does imply an important link between the spiritual and the material realms)

In Reformed Druidism, the material realm, Nature, is personified as the Earth-Mother. The abstract essence of the universe, in opposition to the material world, is referred to as Be'al, from a word which the ancient Celts applied to an abstract supreme being. The "object of Man's search" is called "awareness," and it is defined as "unity with Be'al".

Ritual

In accord with the Basic Tenets, all Reformed Druid worship must be directed toward Nature. For this reason, many customs and rituals of the Ancient Druids, who were essentially Nature-worshippers, are retained.

You can see that the phrasing here, has been greatly re-worded, and he is apologizing for the term "creator", which was a "Fisher-ism", inserted by David Fisher. Fisher, as you know, was uncomfortable with the pagan-possibilities of Druidism, and tried to keep turning it towards a Deist bent. It is interesting that Franquist added the section about the material and spiritual realm and awareness and Be'al. The unfortunate possible implication, perhaps carelessly inserted here in error or convenience, is that all Reformed Druids believe in these metaphysics.

Franquist concluded the pamphlet with:

On a superficial level, it might now seem that the purpose of Reformed Druidism is merely to delve into the strange customs and rituals of the ancient Celts, and to have some fun doing it, and also to serve as a new and different type of protest movement.

But, on deeper examination of the RDNA, it might be said to have two important purposes: (1) It offers a reasonable alternative for the person who cannot stomach organized religion, or who feels that it is somehow deficient; and it hopes that its exotic forms of worship will appeal to the rebel. (2) In communing with Nature, it seeks to promote a spirit of meditation and introspection, aimed ultimately at awareness of religious truth.

1963/1964 First Ordination:

Most Druids learn and pledge to the basic tenets when entering the First Order. What was formally required of Reformed Druids for the First Order? There is only passage anywhere which describes how to become a First Order druid. There is no prescribed Ordination to the First Order Druid, although there were set rituals for the 2nd to 7th Orders as set by the Founders. In the Druid Chronicles we find:

1. Now it was the custom among the Druids, who were reformed, that at every meeting of the congregation, the waters-of-life* should be passed to those present.^a
2. Now **they who subscribe to the Basic Tenets of Reformed Druidism, as prescribed in the Book of the Law**, they are accepted into the body of Druidism which is the organizational body of Druidism only.^b
3. But, they who partake of the waters-of-life in communion with the congregation, they are accepted into the great body of Druidism which is the spiritual body of Druidism only.
4. But the whole and complete body of Druidism consists neither of the organizational body only nor of the spiritual body only, but of the both of them, which are then in whole and complete union.
5. Wherefore, they who have been accepted into the organizational body only are not of the whole body of Druidism;
6. wherefore, neither are they who are of the spiritual body only accepted into the whole body of Druidism.
7. Whereas, they who have been accepted into the spiritual body of Druidism and also into the organizational body thereof is thus accepted into the whole and complete body of the membership of the Reformed Druids;
8. and are thenceforth called by them a Druid of the First Order.*

The Early Formal Constitutional Version:

It is unclear whether this passage means that the initiate must use the exact poetic wording of the Basic Tenets, as “prescribed” in the Book of Law, or whether they must use another actual wording, which might in fact be different than the Book of Law. I don’t think some precision was important to Frangquist, who although an excellent writer and early archiver, moved in the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law. The earliest constitutions on record, from Carleton in 1965 and South Dakota University in 1966, blunt state that the basic tenets as:

- 1) North American Reformed Druids believe that one of the many ways in which the object of man's search for religious truth can be found is through Nature, the Earth-Mother.
- 2) North American Reformed Druids believe that Nature, being one of the primary concerns in man's life and struggle, and being one of the Objects of Creation, is important to man's spiritual quests.

This exact phrasing is repeated in the 1970 Chicago Grove Constitution and the 1977 Carleton Constitution. It appears to be the oldest and most formal expression of the basic tenets.

The Short Hand Foundational Version:

On June 6, 1966, David Frangquist released his Foundation of the Fundamentals (full text follows this article) in which he first utters the simplified form:

B. The Basic Tenets

The Basic Tenets of Reformed Druidism, which form the basis (believe it or not) for the preceding discussion, are found in the Constitution of the Reformed Druids, and in another form in the Book of the Law in *The*

Druid Chronicles (Reformed). They are the quintessences of Druidism, such that a person need accept nothing else and still become a Reformed Druid. They are here presented in their most concentrated form:

1. Nature is good!

And the second is like unto the first:

2. Nature is good!

This appears to imply that Frangquist believes both versions are equal, as are his two short-hands.

The 1968 Berkeley Version:

A year before this was released, 1965, Robert Larson left Carleton without graduating and went to Berkeley California. He later founded a grove there with Isaac Bonewits. This is the Berkeley Grove's 1968 Constitution:

Article the Third

Now, the basic tenets of Reformed Druids are these:

The object of the search for religious truth may be found through the Earth-mother, who is Nature; but this is only one way among many.

Nature, as one of the objects of creation and as something with which our lives are spent, is of great spiritual importance.

Article the Fourth

The basic tenets of Reformed Druidism may also be phrased in the time-honoured three-fold manner, thusly:

1. NATURE is good.
2. Nature IS good.
3. Nature is GOOD.

It appears to be a fusion of the constitution and the Chronicles version. He also has expanded the short-hand version of the Foundation of the Fundamentals.

1974 Bonewits Versions:

Isaac Bonewits was one of the first historians of the RDNA, and probably was familiar with the variants at that time. However by the time of the SDNA in 1974, Isaac's new template constitution for new groves used only the Chronicles terminology:

The Basic Tenets of North American Druidism, as set forth in The Book of Law, are these:

- 1) The object of the search for religious truth, which is a universal and a never-ending search, may be found through the Earth-Mother; which is Nature; but this is one way, one way among many.
- 2) And great is the importance, which is of a spiritual importance, of Nature, which is the Earth-Mother; for it is one of the objects of Creation,

and with it do people live, yea, even as they do struggle through life are they come face-to-face with it.

Isaac while creative in liturgical matters, he is a literalist and prefers a stricter adherence to bylaws and documents. However, Isaac lists in his pamphlet *What and Why is Reformed Druidism in the 1970's?* the following as the beliefs of Reformed Druids:

Basic Beliefs

The principles of the original RDNA are quite simple and are referred to as the “Basic Tenets.” We quote here from *The Book of the Law*, Verses 4-6, as they appear in the Lughnasadh 14 y.r. Edition of *The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)*:¹

“4. Now the Basic Tenets of Reformed Druidism are these:

“5. The object of the search for religious truth, which is a universal and a never-ending search, may be found through the Earth-Mother; which is Nature; but this is one way, yea, one way among many.

6. And great is the importance, which is of a spiritual importance, of Nature, which is the Earth-Mother; for it is one of the objects of Creation, and with it do people live, yea, even as they do struggle through life are they come face-to-face with it.”

This has since been abbreviated, in *The Outline of the Foundation of the Fundamentals*, to the following statements:²

“1. Nature is good! And the second is like unto the first: 2. Nature is good!”

It appears that³ all Reformed Druids, of every Branch of the Reform, believe in the above principles, though all have their own interpretations of the words. In all the Branches of the Reform, the material realm, Nature, is personified as the Earth-Mother (one of the oldest archetypes known to humanity). The abstract essence of the universe(s), in distinction from the material world, is referred to as Be'al, from a word which the Ancient Celts applied to an abstract supreme being (based on the root “Bel”, meaning “good, shining, bright”). The “object of Humanity’s search” is called “awareness” and it is defined as “unity with Be'al”.⁴

Isaac basically copied and elaborated upon Franquist’s 1965 pamphlet, adding a bit more metaphysics at the end, which while interesting, is not part of the Basic Tenets either, but being part of the section “Basic Beliefs” might also lead some Druids to believe it is necessary to agree with it. Reformed Druids must often bend over backwards to avoid misleading people that their well-developed personal beliefs are not those of their grove or the whole movement.

1990 Carleton Variant:

¹ The 1964 pamphlet mentioned the tenets but did not quote them.

² Which is to be found in the apocrypha. The 1974 version had as an abbreviation “Nature is Good! Nature is Good! Yea, Verily, Nature is Good!” As Shelton pointed out “Franquist’s abbreviation... is more satisfactory and preserves the duality.”

³ These first three words are additions from the previous pamphlet. Shelton, and others, were insisting that Bonewits be careful about being overly general, though the statement that follows is generally agreed to be universal.

⁴ The later two thirds of this paragraph is basically from the 1964 pamphlet.

During my own initiation into the first and second order, Matt Cohen turned to me and asked:

“Do you dig that the Earth Mother is good and groovy?”

I agreed that I did dig her in 1990. The revival period of 1986 to 1992 ended soon afterwards. Unlike many Druids of that time, I began reading the older records of the RDNA, and discovered great complexities and past diversities. I redid my first and second ordinations in preparation for reviving the use of the Third Order. I pushed this variant for a while, but since 1996 or so, I’ve stopped using the shorthand versions and moved toward the Chronicles version.

2005 OMS Variant:

OMS is an order derived from Church of All World and RDNA teachings. Reformed Druids of Gaia appears to be another grouping of Reformed Druids in a more international fashion, perhaps a schism like SDNA. Ellis Arsenau lists the Tenets as such on his website.

Traditionally, the Reformed Druids have adhered to two basic tenets:

1. The object of the search for religious truth, which is a universal and a neverending search, may be found through the Earth Mother, which is Nature; but this is one way, yea, one way among many.

-- 'Book of the Law' -- Druid Chronicles

2. And great is the importance, which is of a spiritual importance, of Nature, which is the Earth Mother; for is is one of the objects of Creation, and with it we do live, yea, even as we do struggle through life are we come face to face with it.

-- 'Book of the Law' -- Druid Chronicles

Generally we summarize these as

"Nature is groovy" and "Nature is very groovy."

(More often than not, "good" is substituted for "groovy", but, whatever.)

To these tenets, Mithril Star Druids have added a third:

""Thou art God." It's not a message of cheer and hope. It's a defiance--and an unafraid unabashed assumption of personal responsibility."

--Mike to Jubal, SIASL by Robert A. Heinlein

The Reformed Druids of Gaia only list the two basic tenets of the Chronicles, and do not subscribe to the third tenet, “Thou Art God”, which is derived from the Heinlin book, Stranger In A Strange Land, and is an article of faith for the Church of All Words.

Concluding Thoughts on the Variants.

Okay, so you have seen all the variants. Which is the “true” one?

Reformed Druidism encourages questions, but avoids easy answers, especially about itself. Each version has its advantages and limitations inherent in a literal or poetic reading of the words. What matters more is what the believer feels and intends by his or her statement of one of the variants. I will list a few thoughts on the main variants, although each is so short as to be self-evident to any careful and thoughtful person.

It is obvious to most folks, that if a Reformed Druid espouses something “in the ball park” close to the wording of the basic tenets, either the Constitutional or Chronicles version, we’re pretty much satisfied with them. Basically, Druids have a more-or-less reverence for the ability of Nature to provide useful and important insight or instruction that is pertinent to a spiritual quest. The rest is window dressing, customs (local or group-wide).

The short hand versions are cheeky and shocking to the more formalistic monotheists, and a good reminder to Druids to look to Nature, but they are not a very accurate statement or substitute of the Basic Tenets for me. They also have the term “good”, which brings up the dualistic question, “what is bad?” Naturally, the shortened version is very popular and easy to recall in a pinch and always gets an interesting reaction from the listener.

The Constitutional version is very clear, easy to say in 30 seconds before a listener’s eyes glaze over, and actually quite conducive to a positive response. It is however, a bit dry and leaves out several rather

The longer Chronicle version has several rather encouraging points that I prefer. It is difficult to remember. It will also confuse most listeners and leave them wondering what you mean, but sounds more impressive.

Interestingly, there are several larger religions that have very few point of faith. Several protestant splinter groups require such statements as “Jesus is my personal savior” and not a whit more among its membership, not even being textual literalist with the bible. Very loose indeed. Jodo Joshu Buddhism in Japan, a million or more adherents, is also similar in that a believer must merely state “Namu Butsu” (Buddha save me) three times with utter sincerity, and they will be delivered from this world when they die. So don’t let just two tenets be a point of embarrassment for you! Just because it isn’t down on paper and mumbled each week, doesn’t mean your groups doesn’t have beliefs, ethics or mores, they are just assumed, flexible or tacit.

Foundation of Fundamentals

(By David Frangquist, 1966)

BEING: a brief catalogue of the major quasi-metaphysical-theological conclusions which may be abstracted from and by the application of the Reformed Druid point of view to questions of ultimate relevance (in outline form).

THE THREE PILLARS (or treasures, or paths, or baskets, or roots, or branches, or wondrous illuminations)

I. The Relentless Rebellion (threefold)

A. The categorical If

No Intellectually honest mind can long remain so termed unless it is willing to submit all things to rigorous examination, even the most sacred provinces. Blind faith is no faith; it is blindness.

B. The Principle of Non-Confirmation

Applying rigorous scrutiny to the world's religions, we find, especially in western form, universal claims to exclusiveness; yet none submits any more proof of its claim than an appeal to faith. Logically, therefore, all are equal.

C. The Principle of Non-Conformation

In the face of the insoluble problem of selecting the "one true faith" most people conform to one of two patterns:

1. **The True Believer** embraces the faith of his fathers wholeheartedly and unquestioningly, fearing to face the logical possibility (probability?) that he is wrong.

2. **The Non-Believer** rejects all faiths out of hand, fearing that he might prove himself a fool by choosing the wrong one.

Reformed Druids reject the necessity of conforming to either of these patterns based on fear. True spiritual growth exists only in the *Relentless Rebellion* against petrified norms.

II. The Paths of Paradox (also threefold)

A. The Ceremonial Syndrome

Man is incurably finite. He cannot conceive of spiritual activity except in terms of ritualistic hocus-pocus. But ritual must be carefully selected or it will independently acquire magical properties of its own. Ritual properly constitutes a springboard for the spirit only. Oak worship is ideal for this purpose (see also III).

B. The Primacy of Ambiguity

True spiritual growth consisting of personal effort and rebellion, Reformed Druidism must remain devoid of orthodoxy. All writings must be ambiguous and non-final (present dissertation included).

C. The Principle of Non-Confirmation (rears its ugly head again)

You'll get no pat answers here. There being no logical basis for the acceptance or denial of any faith, Reformed

Druidism confirms nothing (including Reformed Druidism). You're welcome to, but you're on your own.

III. The Last Refuge (whadaya know?...threefold!)

A. The Noble Fivefold Formulation

1. The Nature of Life

Life is defined as the unity of the spiritual (Be'al) and the material (the Earth-Mother). Without the material the spiritual has no form; without the spiritual the material is dead.

2. And Man?

Man, as a living animal, ideally consists of both material and spiritual.

3. And Man?

Man is unique. This is because he has self-awareness. He passes from self-awareness through self-centeredness to self-importance, thence to self-isolation, resulting in self-misery.

4. Unity for All and All for Unity

Man's self-importance cuts him off from the life-giving benefits of unity with the spirit and Nature (the material). Druids sometimes call unity *Awareness*. It is the object of religion to restore unity; most concentrate on the direct attainment of spiritual unity, ignoring (or rejecting) the material.

5. Back to Nature

Druids (at least some of them) believe that a good approach is to first restore material unity. Having broken down part of the barrier around the self, the rest should then be easier. Hence, Druid Nature worship: the ideality of going to worship oaks.

B. The Basic Tenets

The Basic Tenets of Reformed Druidism, which form the basis (believe it or not) for the preceding discussion, are found in the Constitution of the Reformed Druids, and in another form in the Book of the Law in *The Druid Chronicles (Reformed)*. They are the quintessences of Druidism, such that a person need accept nothing else and still become a Reformed Druid. They are here presented in their most concentrated form:

1. Nature is good!

And the second is like unto the first:

2. Nature is good!

C. The Last Refuge

It is simple to grind out these systems. It is the expected thing to do. Perhaps it is useful. It is meaningless!

It is simple to sit on the Hill of the Three Oaks and look at the pretty blue sky. That, too, can be meaningless!

It is not so simple to stand alone under the pretty blue sky and watch all your preconceived systems come tumbling down.

But when they come tumbling down, there is a refuge: in Nature. There one may find a clearing of the head, a freedom from stagnant forms, a beginning. (The End)

David Frangquist 6/6/66

BAD CORNER

Cursing like a Celt

By Mike the Fool



Okay, you can curse like a sailor, but do you know how to curse like a Celt? In modern Druidism, we try to put forth the image that we are all goody-two-shoes and would never hex or curse any one with “black magic”. I don’t, but some do. The famous “Druid Curse” in the *Druid Chronicles* is known to but four living persons, and they have sworn never to reveal it. I don’t know it. But for some who feel like cursing people they don’t like, this article is for you.

Bardic Cursing

Pg 49-52 of *A Druid’s Herbal of Sacred Tree Medicine* by Ellen Hopman
See the Book Review in *Samhain 2008 Issue of Druid Inquirer*.

But the most awesome and frightening skill of the poet was the deadly art of satire. There were a number of different forms of satire that required a fine of the victim’s honor price. These included making fun of someone’s appearance, broadcasting that someone had a blemish, coining a derogatory nickname, and formally composing a satire about a person, or repeating a satire composed by someone else. Mocking gestures, taunting someone, falsely accusing someone of stealing and spreading an untrue, destructive tale about another person, whether that person was dead or alive, were grounds for legal action....

There was a specific type of satire that was particularly deadly, which is of most relevance to us here. The *Uraichecht Na Riar* (The Poetic Grades of Early Irish Law) includes a description of the magical technique for composing a *Glam dicenn* (a poet’s black magic). The poet composed the satire in the shade of a hawthorn tree with no thorns and a dense, heavy top. The satire had to be repeated “three-time-nine” (twenty-seven) times, in the “circuit of the moon” (possibly over a one-month period). While chanting, the poet had to pierce a clay likeness of the person being satirized with thorns. (*Bretnach, Uraichecht Na Riar, 115*)

Another description says that the “seven grades of poets” must go to a hilltop before sunrise. With their backs to a hawthorn tree, and the with the wind from the north (the direction of battle, as we saw above) they should hold a thorn from the hawthorn tree in each hand as they chant the satire. (*Bretnach, Uraichecht Na Riar, 140*)”

Two Further Online Resources

Check out this URL <http://www.csad.ox.ac.uk/rib/ribiv/jp4.htm> and read this book (it has a lot of translations and will give you several good cursing guides): [_Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World_](#) by John G.Gager ISBN 978-0-19-513482-7.

For those with web access, there is the Celtic Curse Generator at <http://hermes.lincolnu.edu/~focal/scripts/mallacht.htm> which is recommended by Sam Adams. Impress your friends, coworkers, and enemies with curses they won't be able to understand and will frighten them all the more!



Winter Birding

An article from ADF's Website.

Bird watching and feeding in the winter can be fun for us and good for the birds

As the weather chills and the days shorten, it's easy to make excuses to stay indoors most of the time.

The natural world that sustains us physically and spiritually seems to recede beyond our windows and becomes little more than a heating bill and driving annoyance. You can, however,

stave off some of that isolation by attracting winter birds to your yard.

Songbirds in particular need to eat every day to keep their body temperatures high enough to survive the cold nights. A few dollars investment in a feeder and seeds will do. A four-year study of bird feeding found that common mid-Atlantic birds preferred sunflower seeds, followed by peanut hearts, cracked yellow corn, white millet, and canary seed. Red millet, milo, oats, wheat and rice are generally avoided when the preferred foods are available. You can also hang beef suet (get it from the butcher) or treat your local fauna to the occasional peanut butter, hard-cooked eggs, or bread crumbs.

Do *not* spread moldy bread—it contains potentially fatal toxins—and, by the same token, store seed in a dry place to keep it from molding. Cracked corn should simply be distributed on the ground, as it can freeze and clog the openings in feeders. You can also distribute sunflower seeds on the ground, but the squirrels will almost certainly get most of them.

Feeders with small openings and perches boost the odds for the birds: make sure openings are big enough to accommodate sunflower seeds. Ideally, hang feeders from tree branches. If you don't have any trees near windows, you can buy a post on which to erect your feeder. Wall-mounted brackets can be used as a last resort, but you run the risk of birds crashing into your windows.

Here is a quick (and admittedly mid-Atlantic-based) guide to the visitors you might encounter:

Black-capped chickadee: Year-round favorites for their cheery song and call. Look for a gray back and wings, white belly, and the distinctive black cap and chin.

White-breasted nut-hatch: At a glance, look similar to chickadees, but with a white chin. Look for them climbing headfirst down tree trunks, searching for insects that the "up-climbers" miss.

Dark-eyed junco: These birds can vary in color, but are usually a uniform slate or grayish color with a somewhat darker head and white feathers bordering the tail. They are ground feeders, and you will often see them eating the seeds that other birds knock from the feeder.

Tufted titmouse: Another small and greet bird with a white underbelly. Look for the crest of gray feathers and a black patch on the forehead.

Finches: The most common feeder species, the house and purple finches, can be tricky to tell apart. Both have brown backs and wings. The male purple finch has a rose-colored cap and breast, while the male house finch has a reddish breast and more brown on the cap. Females of both are brown streaked with white: look for a white "eyebrow" on the female purple finch. Also, in both sexes, the purple finch has a forked tail and the house finch a squared-off tail.

Keep an eye out for **blue jays**, **cardinals**, **mourning doves** and **downy woodpeckers** as well. The small birds in your yard may even attract sharp-shinned or Cooper's **hawks**.

I have known several people who were greatly disturbed when they discovered that their bird feeder had turned into a hawk feeder. The fact of the matter is that many song birds ultimately end up as meals for hawks. I consider it a privilege to witness Nature in action. On the other hand, domestic cats are not part of the natural landscape. Keep yours indoors or put bells on them, ask your neighbors to do the same, and take strays to the SPCA.

If you feel particularly ambitious and live near a decent-sized body of water, bundle up and head out! You will be rewarded with many species of waterfowl that spend the summer in Canada, including bufflehead, common goldeneye, old squaw, merganser, canvasback, redhead, and scaup. You might want to arm yourself with a pair of binoculars and a field guide if you head into the cold. Look for a guide that shows plumage differences with sex and season. Peterson's Guides and Golden Guides are both very good, but my favorite is National Geographic; because it covers all of North America and has the illustrations, description, and range maps for each species on the same page. You can also call your local chapter of the Audubon Society for good winter birding spots. May the feathered nature spirits, warm your soul this winter!

References:

National Geographic Society, Field Guide to the Birds of North America. 1987.
Pistorius, Alan. The Country Journal Book of Birding and Bird Attraction. 1981.



Calling the Hunter

by George Cooney of ADF
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In order to be at peace, it is necessary to feel a sense of history - that you are both part of what has come before and part of what is yet to come. Being thus surrounded, you are not alone; and the sense of urgency that pervades the present is put in perspective. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Pagans know life as a process rather than a stasis. For us, being is always in motion. Even when our lives seem steady and predictable, our beliefs tell us we are moving towards the next transition: the Corn plant stands under the Sun, day after Summer day, on its way to the time of seed-making and dying; later, the dry frozen seed will endure for months in the unchanging dark under the Earth, on its way to the time of sprouting and ascent. Our liturgy is based on these transitions; by our ritual celebrations of the turning of the Wheel through the cycle of the year, our minds and spirits are led to rehearse our own journey through growth, death and rebirth.

Issues of death are much in the world's news these days. When should a patient, or a family member, reject medical treatment intended to prolong life? Will assisted suicide become an accepted part of the physician's repertoire? On one hand, we hear of brain-dead individuals kept alive by machines; on the other, we see the prospect of medical rationing, with insurance companies deciding where to allocate scarce treatment resources. Opinions are offered from a multitude of perspectives: social, moral and economic. We must decide where our own beliefs lead us; what is to be our attitude towards death?

Our Pagan tradition reaches back a long time for answers, back to the days when humans first awakened and began to wonder about the Goddesses and Gods who turned the Wheel. From the teachings of our fathers and mothers in those early days we learn that life and death are a polarity, like a two ends of a magnet; we see this polarity in our everyday lives, manifested in a constant tension between that which builds and that which breaks down. The familiar yearly cycle, from the rising sprout to the rotting stalk, moves in the space between those poles; and that cycle is reflected in the longer story of our own life's progress.

First, we are conceived and birthed; our potential becomes specific; Spirit forms the word that is us.

Next, we grow into maturity; our life gathers experience and takes its shape; our activity adds to the complexity of the world around us.

Finally, we die; we release our life into Spirit's unlimited potential.

In practice, of course, moving along the Wheel is not easy. Even though we know that death has its place, most of us are not ready to embrace it nor even to think about it. Instead the desire for continued life occupies our will. From the depths of our nature we resist death, and we rage against its approach. When death seems to come too soon, we protest, saying "Oh no! Not yet! Not now!" and there is the sudden desperate screech of brakes, the clawed fingerhold on a rock face, the heart jolted back into rhythm in an emergency room. Instinctively, we act to preserve life. Lugh the Lightbringer, the god who ripens the Corn, symbolized this instinct, and we call upon him in our fight for life.

Yet die we must. As Sherwin Nuland points out in his book, *How We Die*, we must die for the sake of our species; if somehow we contrived to live forever, we would quickly overwhelm our environment's carrying capacity and all perish like lemmings. "Must," in biological terms, thus carries not only its ordinary meaning of inevitability, but also a sense of appropriateness. Our need for death is personified in Herne the Hunter, sometimes called Cernunnos by the Celts. He is the god of culling, who takes away life for the sake of balance and health in the world.

There is even a point where we know it is time for death. Those who work with elders or with the terminally ill have seen people come to that point: the demands of continued life become unreasonable in terms of pain, bodily dissolution, failure of dignity, and loss of contact with one's surroundings; when life no longer returns value in measure with those increasing demands, then we begin to see death as timely. Herne's approach does not inspire the same rage and resistance when our instincts tell us death is timely; and when the Hunter has finished, even our mourning has a different flavor. We still grieve the empty space the dead person has left in our lives, but the other, angry sense of life un-lived - of death cheating life - is absent. When someone we know has a timely death, it is easier for us to give inward assent to the ancient truth that life and death - Lugh and Herne - are really showing forth the same Spirit.

What distinguishes the Pagan moral attitude about death is that it affirms the polarity between death and life, without making that polarity into a duality. We do not label as "evil" the force that moves living things towards death. At one moment we might be fighting with all our strength to save our own life or someone else's; at another moment we might be struggling to let go, so death can play its part. Both efforts are "good" in their season. It is our perception of the timeliness of the death that makes the difference. When death approaches out of season (as we perceive it), we struggle against it at the side of Lugh, the Warrior who brings Light and Life. When we believe life is completed, we are ready to call upon Herne the Hunter.

As the world struggles with present-day death issues, it has much to learn from our old religion. For example, if our health-care delivery system learned the appropriateness (and sacredness) of a timely death, emphasis might shift away from hopeless intervention, and move rather in the direction of honoring the transition. Good pain management, home surroundings, and time for parting interaction with family and friends can help a patient wind up this round of living and get on with his or her death. Perhaps such a shift of emphasis might reduce the demand for assisted suicide, once patients realize that a timely death is available through the mainstream health-care system.

For each of us, it is important to decide the place of Lugh and Herne in our lives. What is "timely death" for us? Will we call the hunter when we can no longer....

play a round of golf?

make love?

sit our grandchild on our lap?

taste food?

recognize our friends?

Where do we draw this important boundary? The persons closest to us must be part of the decision-making process, as must be our medical caregivers; because when the time comes, we may not be able to express ourselves. Our wishes should be in writing (some states have laws about how the writing is put together) and our friends and doctors should be well aware of what we want. As far as Fate permits, the life-death decision is our own; we should do everything possible so that our journey

from this life reflects our beliefs, and honors the Lightbringer and the Hunter between whom our Wheel has turned.

QUOTE CORNER

Death (Green Book 2, Gaelic Thoughts)

Death looks the old in the face and lurks behind the youths.

Dead men tell not tales, but there's many a thing learned in a wake house.

There are more lies told in a wake-room than in a court-room.

Death is deaf, and will hear nae denial.

Death and Fate (Green Book 4)

He who has been near to death knows the worth of life. - Turkemestan

The fall of a leaf is a whisper to the living. -Russian

He who is fated to hang will never drown. -Scottish

One Calamity is better than a thousand counsels. -Turkish

Your karma ran over my dogma. -Unknown

I'm not afraid to die. I just don't want to be there when it happens. - Woody Allen

I cannot tell you your fate, a man should not know his fate until he is halfway through life. If he were to know sooner, it would all seem an illusion. - Plexus, *Gatorr*

If my decomposing carcass helps nourish the roots of a juniper tree or the wings of a vulture, that is immortality enough for me. And as much as anyone deserves. -Ed Abbey.

Death (Green Book 5, Native American Thoughts)

There is no death, only a change of worlds. -Duwamish

A brave man dies but once -a coward many times. -Iowa

In death I am born. -Hopi

They are not dead who live in the hearts they leave behind. - Tuscarora

All who have died are equal. -Comanche

Sing your death song and die like a hero going home. -Shawnee.

Death always comes out of season. -Pawnee

Life is not separate from death, it only looks that way. -Blackfoot

The Dead add their strength and counsel to the living. -Hopi

Grief (Green Book 5, Native American Thoughts)

Our pleasures are shallow, our sorrows are deep. -Cheyenne

The Soul would have no rainbow if the eyes had no tears. - Miquass

Don't let yesterday use up too much of today. -Cherokee

What is past and cannot be prevented should not be grieved for. - Pawnee

Don't be afraid to cry. It will free your mind of sorrowful thoughts. -Hopi

The old days will never be again, even as a man will never again be a child. -Dakota

Day of the Dead

In the keen obsidian night, lost
On a lightless street in a nameless town
We ask directions in splintered Spanish
As a white dog howls and seems to vanish.

Cameras, tapes and pens in hand, blindly
We've come to see to hear and know
What's in our blood but not our head
The dance of ghosts that's never dead.

Across a ditch and mounds of earth, seething
Between the graves and flowering trees
The crowd reflects its buried past
In a riot of masks and stamping feet.

At the molten core of the shouting throng, twirling
To the eternal tattoo of the fleeting song,
Witches, demons and holy ghouls
Lean and lurch with laughing fools.

I ask the man beside me, reeling
What the mirrored masks are hiding
And feel the air outside my skin
Tug at something deep within.

You want to understand? he say, smiling
And offers me a drink as a grinning devil
Snags my eye, daring me to follow

I lift the cup of dreams and swallow.

-Guy Garcia (born in L.A.)

The Land of the Dead (Green Book 5, Aztec)

Here on earth our hearts say:
Oh my friends, would that we were immortal,
Oh friends, where is the land in which one does not die?
Shall it be that I go?
Does my mother live there? Does my father live there?

Why Do We Live?

Is it true that on earth one lives?
Not forever on earth, only a little while.
Though jade it may be, it breaks;
Though gold it may be, it is crushed;
Though it be quetzal plumes, it shall not last.
Not forever on earth, only a little while.

Flowers

Every man on earth
carries with him some conviction;
but it is for a brief period only
that flowers of happiness pass before our eyes.

Dreams and Flowers

We come only to sleep,
We come only to dream:
It is not true, not true we come to live on the earth:
Spring grass are we become;
It comes, gloriously trailing, it puts out buds, our heart,
The flower of our bodies opens a few petals and withers!

About Death (Green Book 5: Japanese Thoughts)

It comes from the origin,
It returns to the original land
In the Plain of High Heaven-
That spirit is one and the same,
Not two.
The Way of death
Is found in one's own mind
And no other;
Inquire of it in your own heart,
In your own mind.
Leave to the kami
The path ahead;
The road of the returning soul
Is not dark
To the land of the Yomi,
To the world beyond.
In all things
Maintaining godly uprightness:
Such a one at last will see
All dark clouds cleared away.
All humanity born into
The land of sun-origin, this
Land of Japan,
Come from the kami,
And to the kami will return.
-Naokata Nakanishi, Shinto Priest, 19th Cent.

Death and Aging (Green Book 5: Aphoristic Advice)

A man's dying is more the survivors' affair than his own. -Thomas Mann

Our repugnance to death increases in proportion to our consciousness of having lived in vain. -William Hazlitt

Days and months are travelers of eternity. So are the years that pass by... I myself have been tempted for a long time by the cloud-moving wind - filled with a strong desire to wander. -Basho

Tzu-Lu asked how one should serve ghosts and spirits. The Master said, How can there be any proper service of spirits until living men have been properly served? Tzu-lu then ventured upon a question about the dead [whether they are conscious]. The Master said, Until a man knows about the living, how can he know about the dead? -Confucius, Analects, 11,11

Excess of grief for the deceased is madness, for it is an injury to the living, and the dead know it not. -Xenophanes

It's not that I'm afraid to die. I just don't want to be there when it happens. -Woody Allen

The world is moving so fast these days that the man who says it can't be done is generally interrupted by someone doing it. -Elbert Hubbard

The youth get together his materials to build a bridge to the moon, or perchance, a place or temple on the earth, and at length, the middle aged man concludes to build a woodshed with them. -Henry David Thoreau

For the unlearned, old age is winter; for the learned it is the season of the harvest. -Talmud

The idea wants changelessness and eternity. Whoever lives under the supremacy of the idea strives for permanence; hence, everything that pushes toward change must be against it. -Carl Jung

Folly is our constant companion throughout life, if someone appears wise, it is only because his follies are suited to his age and station. -Francois de La Rochefoucauld

You can not step twice into the same river, for other waters are continually flowing on. -Heraclitus

For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: "It might have been!" -John Greenleaf Whittier

Perhaps in time the so-called dark ages will be thought of as including our own. -George Christoph Lichtenburg

If you were to destroy the belief in immortality in mankind, not only love but every living force on which the continuation of all life in the world depended, would dry up at once. Moreover, there would be nothing immoral then, everything would be permitted. -Fyodor Dostoyevsky

There is no cure for birth and death save to enjoy the interval. -George Santayana

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. -Henry David Thoreau

You live and learn, or you don't live long. -Robert Heinlein

Youth is wasted on the young. -George Burns

When the waitress puts the dinner on the table, the old men look at the dinner. The young men look at the waitress. -Gelett Burgess

Death (Green Book 5: Wit and Wisdom of Women)

I once wrote that the best way to write was to do so as if one were already dead: afraid of no one's reactions, answerable to no one's views. I still think that is the way to write. -Nadine Gordimer

People living deeply have no fear of death. -Anais Nin

STORY CORNER

Stories about Death from the Green Books

Death and Change (Green Book 5)

The king asked: 'When someone is reborn, is he the same as the one who has just died, or is he another?'

The Elder replied: 'He is neither the same nor another.'

'Give me an illustration.'

'What do you think, great king; when you were a tiny infant, newly born and quite soft, were you then the same as the one who is now grown up?'

'No, that infant was one, I now grown up am another.'

'If that is so then, great king, you have had no mother, no father, no teaching, and no schooling!... We must understand it as the collocation of a series of successive conditions. At rebirth one condition arises, while another stops.' -Milanda's Questions, 40

The Skull (Green Book 5: African Stories)

A Tale from West Africa

A hunter came upon a huge tree with a whitened skull at its base. The skull spoke and said, "Beyond a certain hill is a field of calabashes. Take them to your hungry village, but do not tell anyone how you obtained them."

"How did you come to be here?" asked the hunter.

"My mouth killed me," said the skull.

The hunter returned to the village with the calabashes and immediately told everyone, "A talking skull showed me a field of food!" The Chief called him a liar.

"Then come with me! I'll prove what I say is true. When they arrived at the tree, the hunter spoke to the skull but it remained silent. The hunter was put to death on the spot for lying.

In time, two whitened skulls sat beneath the tree. The first turned to the second and said, "See, in death we meet again, my kin. It's true a mouth can do you in!"

Death and the Old Man (Green Book 5: Aesop's Fables)

An old man that had traveled a long way under a huge burden of sticks found himself so weary that he threw it down, and called to Death to deliver him from such a miserable life. Death quickly came at his call, and asked what he could do for him. 'Oh, good sir,' says the old man, 'please help me stand up and carry my burden again.'

Moral: Men call upon Death, as they do for the Devil, but when he comes they're afraid of him.

When Death is not Death (Green 5: Way of the Sufis)

A certain man was believed to have died, and was being prepared for burial, when he revived. He sat up, but was so shocked at the scene surrounding him that he fainted. He was put in a coffin, and the funeral party set off for the cemetery.

Just as they arrived at the grave, he gained consciousness, lifted the coffin lid, and cried out for help.

'It is not possible that he has revived,' said the mourners, 'because he has been certified dead by competent experts.'

'But I am alive!' shouted the man.

He appealed to a well-known and impartial scientist and jurisprudence who was present.

'Just a moment,' said the expert.

He then turned to the mourners, counting them. 'Now, we have heard what the alleged deceased has had to say. You fifty witnesses tell me what you regard as the truth.'

'He is dead,' said the witnesses.

'Bury him!' said the expert.

And so he was buried.

The Caravansary

Once Khidr went to the King's palace and made his way right up to the throne.

Such was the strangeness of his appearance that none dared to stop him.

The king, who was Ibrahim ben Adam, asked him what he was looking for.

The visitor said: 'I am looking for a sleeping-place in this caravansary.'

Ibrahim answered: 'This is no caravansary, this is my palace.'

The stranger said: 'Whose was it before you?'

'My father's', said Ibrahim.

'And before that?'

'My grandfather's.'

'And this place, where people come and go, staying and moving on, you call other than a caravansary?'

Two Thoughts from David (Green Book 5: Jewish Thoughts and Words)

King David's practical wisdom was legendary.

Once, one of king's infant children became critically ill. David prayed and fasted. He slept on the ground for the week of the illness. After that week, the baby died. The king's servants were afraid to tell him of the tragedy. Against such expectations, when David heard the sad news he changed clothes, went to pray, and then ate a meal.

The servants, quite surprised at his reaction, asked him why when the child had been ill he had fasted and cried, yet when the child died, he had gotten up and eaten.,

The king replied, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept for I thought, who knows whether the Lord will not be gracious to me that the child may live. But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back?"

King David went to the court jeweler. He told the jeweler to make him a ring and to inscribe on it some statement that would temper excessive delight in an hour of triumph, but also lift him from despair in an hour of loss. The jeweler thought long and hard about what kind of statement should be inscribed. But he was perplexed; he could not find suitable words.

Solomon finally offered a suggestion: "Inscribe on the ring the words Gam Zeh Ya-avor - This, too, shall pass."

-David reigned 1010-970 B.C.E., Second king of Israel

The Butcher and Papanubandhu Pap: (Green Book 5: Jain Thoughts)

There lived a butcher in Magadh city. He enjoyed his job. One day, King Shrenik decided that there would be no more killing in the city. All killing in the city halted except for this butcher's killing. As to when he was asked why he did not observe King Shrenik's command, he said he loved killing and could not stop. King Shrenik decided to put him in an almost dry well so that there would be nothing to kill. To everyone's surprise, the killing did not stop there either. The butcher made animals with wet clay and then pretended to kill them. Since he was enjoying killing so much, he accumulated pap (bad karmas), which gave rise to a situation where he could do nothing other than, continue killing.

Nonviolence Prayer

From clubs and knives, stakes and maces, breaking my limbs,
An infinite number of times I have suffered without hope.
By keen-edged razors, by knives and shears,
Many time I have been drawn and quartered, torn apart and skinned.
Helpless in snares and traps, a deer,
I have been caught and bound and fastened, and often I have been killed.
A helpless fish, I have been caught with hooks and nets;
An infinite number of times I have been killed and scraped, split and gutted.
A bird, I have been caught by hawks or trapped in nets,
Or held fast by birdlime, and I have been killed an infinite number of times.
A tree, with axes and adzes by carpenters
An infinite number of times I have been felled, stripped of my bark, cut up, and sawn into planks.
As iron, with hammer and tongs by blacksmiths
An infinite number of times I have been struck and beaten, split and filed....
Ever afraid, trembling, in pain and suffering,
I have felt the utmost sorrow and agony....

In every kind of existence I have suffered
Pains which have scarcely known reprieve for a moment.
-Prince Mrgaputra

Sand Castles (Green Book 5: Buddhist Thoughts)

Some children were playing beside a river. They made castles of sand, and each child defended his castle and said, "This one is mine." They kept their castles separate and would not allow any mistakes about which was whose. When the castles were all finished, one child kicked over someone's else's castle and completely destroyed it. The owner of the castle flew into a rage, pulled the other child's hair, struck him with his fist and bawled out, "He has spoilt my castle! Come along all of you and help me to punish him as he deserves." The others all came to his help. They beat the child with a stick and then stamped on him as he lay on the ground. Then they went on playing in their sand-castles, each saying, "This is mine; no one else may have it. Keep away! Don't touch my castle!" But evening came; it was getting dark and they all thought they ought to be going home. No one now cared what became of his castle. One child stamped on his, another pushed his over with both his hands. Then they turned away and went back each to his home.

Going To Heaven

Father Murphy walks into a pub in Donegal and says to the first man he meets, "Do you want to go to Heaven?"

The man said, "I do, Father."

The priest said, "Then stand over there against the wall."

The priest asked the second man, "Do you want to go to Heaven?"

"Certainly, Father," was the man's reply.

"Then stand over there against the wall," said the priest.

Then Father Murphy walked up to O'Toole and said, "Do you want to go to Heaven?"

O'Toole said, "No, I don't Father."

The priest said, "I don't believe this. You mean to tell me that when you die, you don't want to go to Heaven?"

O'Toole said, "Oh, when I die, yes. I thought you were getting a group together to go right now."

Three More Short Ghost Stories

#1 The Coffin

I will never leave you," she said, as she pulled him into her coffin.

#2 Waking Up

Waking in a sweat he reached out for the bedside light and felt instead a face

#3 Two Strangers

Two strangers were talking.

"I do not believe in ghosts" said one.

"Don't you?" said the other as he vanished.



The Gift of the Magi

By O. Henry

A Classic Tale of Giving and Receiving

Submitted by Mike the Fool

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent [imputation](#) of [parsimony](#) that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas. There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the [mendicancy](#) squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling--something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to [depreciate](#) Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mne. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practised hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum [fob](#) chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by [meretricious](#) ornamentation--as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value--the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends--a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a [truant](#) schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do--oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty- seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit for saying little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two--and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again--you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say `Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice-- what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you--sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year--what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs--the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims--just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men--wonderfully wise men--who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.



Touching Elephant Story

From the Internet.

Submitted by Mike the Fool

Sometimes I like these heartwarming stories, but this one is truly interesting.

In 1986, Dan Harrison was on holiday in Kenya after graduating from Northwestern University. On a hike through the bush, he came across a young bull elephant standing with one leg raised in the air. The elephant seemed distressed, so Dan approached it very carefully. He got down on one knee and inspected the elephant's foot and found a large piece of wood deeply embedded in it.

As carefully and as gently as he could, Dan worked the wood out with his hunting knife, after which the elephant gingerly put down its foot. The elephant turned to face the man, and with a rather curious look

on its face, stared at him for several tense moments. Dan stood frozen, thinking of nothing else but being trampled. Eventually the elephant trumpeted loudly, turned, and walked away.

Dan never forgot that elephant or the events of that day. Twenty years later, Dan was walking through the Chicago Zoo with his teenaged son. As they approached the elephant enclosure, one of the creatures turned and walked over to near where Dan and his son Dan Jr. were standing. The large bull elephant stared at Dan, lifted its front foot off the ground, then put it down. The elephant did that several times then trumpeted loudly, all the while staring at the man.

Remembering the encounter in 1986, Dan couldn't help wondering if this was the same elephant. Dan summoned up his courage, climbed over the railing and made his way into the enclosure. He walked right up to the elephant and stared back in wonder. The elephant trumpeted again, wrapped its trunk around one of Dan's legs and slammed him against the railing, killing him instantly.

Probably wasn't the same elephant.
Be careful what you touch.

BARD IN REVIEW



Stan Rogers

Stanley Allison "Stan" Rogers (November 29, 1949 – June 2, 1983) was a Canadian folk musician and songwriter.

Rogers was noted for his rich, baritone voice and his finely-crafted, traditional-sounding songs which were frequently inspired by Canadian history and the daily lives of working people, especially those from the fishing villages of the Maritime provinces and, later, the farms of the Canadian prairies and Great Lakes. Rogers died in a fire aboard Air Canada Flight 797 on the ground at the Greater Cincinnati Airport at the age of 33. His influence on Canadian folk music has been deep and lasting.

Rogers' songs often had a Celtic feel which was due, in part, to his frequent use of DADGAD guitar tuning. His best known pieces include "[Northwest Passage](#)," "[Barrett's Privateers](#)," "[The Mary Ellen Carter](#)," "[Make and Break Harbour](#)," "[The Idiot](#)," "[The Field Behind the Plow](#)," "[Lies](#)," "[Fogarty's Cove](#)," "[White Squall](#)" and "[Forty-Five Years](#)."

Witch of the Westmoreland

Pale was the wounded knight, that bore the rowan shield
Loud and cruel were the raven's cries that feasted on the field
Saying "Beck water cold and clear will never clean your wound
There's none but the witch of the Westmoreland can make thee hale
and soond"

So turn, turn your stallion's head 'til his red mane flies in the wind
And the rider of the moon goes by and the bright star falls behind
And clear was the pale moon when his shadow passed him by
below the hills were the brightest stars when he heard the owlet cry

Saying "Why do you ride this way, and wherefore came you here?"
"I seek the Witch of the Westmorland that dwells by the winding
mere"

And it's weary by the Ullswater and the misty brake fern way
Til throught the cleft in the Kirkstane Pass the winding water lay

He said "Lie down, by brindled hound and rest ye, my good grey
hawk

And thee, my steed may graze thy fill for I must dismount and
walk,
But come when you hear my horn and answer swift the call
For I fear ere the sun will rise this morn ye will serve me best of
all"

And it's down to the water's brim he's born the rowan shield
And the goldenrod he has cast in to see what the lake might yield
And wet she rose from the lake, and fast and fleet went she
One half the form of a maiden fair with a jet black mare's body

And loud, long and shrill he blew til his steed was by his side
High overhead the grey hawk flew and swiftly did he ride
Saying "Course well, my brindled hound, and fetch me the jet black
mare
Stoop and strike, my good grey hawk, and bring me the maiden
fair"

She said "Pray, sheathe thy silvery sword. Lay down thy rowan
shield
For I see by the briny blood that flows you've been wounded in the
field"

And she stood in a gown of the velvet blue, bound round with a silver chain
And she's kissed his pale lips once and twice and three times round again

And she's bound his wounds with the goldenrod, full fast in her arms he lay
And he has risen hale and sound with the sun high in the day
She said "Ride with your brindled hound at heel, and your good grey hawk in hand
There's none can harm the knight who's lain with the Witch of the Westmorland."

Giant

Cold wind on the water, and rain on the road
Wet promise of winter brings recourse to coal
There's a fire in the blood and a fog on Bras d'Or
The giant will rise with the moon.

It's the same ancient fever from the isles of the blessed
That our fathers brought with them when they "went west"
It's the blood of the druids that never will rest
The giant will rise with the moon.

CHORUS: So crash the glass down, move with the tide
Young friends and old whiskey are burning inside
Crash the glass down, Fingal will rise ... with the moon.

In inclement weather the people are fey
Three thousand year stories as the night slips away
To think of old Fingal seems not far away
The giant will rise with the moon.

T

he wind's from the north, there'll be a new moon tonight
But we have no circle to dance in its sight
So light a torch, bring a bottle, and build the fire bright
The giant will rise with the moon.

(Chorus)

(Repeat first part of first verse)

The Field Behind the Plow

Watch the field behind the plow turn to straight, dark rows
Feel the trickle in your clothes, blow the dust cake from your nose
Hear the tractor's steady roar, Oh you can't stop now
There's a quarter section more or less to go

And it figures that the rain keeps its own sweet time
You can watch it come for miles, but you guess you've got a while
So ease the throttle out a hair, every rod's a gain
And there's victory in every quarter mile

Poor old Kuzyk down the road
The heartache, hail and hoppers brought him down
He gave it up and went to town

And Emmett Pierce the other day
Took a heart attack and died at forty two
You could see it coming on 'cause he worked as hard as you

In an hour, maybe more, you'll be wet clear through
The air is cooler now, pull you hat brim further down
And watch the field behind the plow turn to straight dark rows
Put another season's promise in the ground

And if the harvest's any good
The money just might cover all the loans
You've mortgaged all you own

Buy the kids a winter coat
Take the wife back east for Christmas if you can
All summer she hangs on when you're so tied to the land

For the good times come and go, but at least there's rain
So this won't be barren ground when September rolls around
So watch the field behind the plow turn to straight dark rows
Put another season's promise in the ground

Watch the field behind the plow turn to straight dark rows
Put another season's promise in the ground

BOTANY CORNER

Picking Out A Good Christmas Tree

Any of the common firs or spruces is a good choice for a Yule tree. When I was married to my 2nd husband, we got our tree for free by simply cutting some of the many redwood suckers (sprouts or sprigs) on his parents'

property and binding them together with string to form a "tree".

If you do go to a tree farm to cut a tree, be sure to make sure that the dryad (tree spirit) has departed from the tree.

Tegwedd

Balsam Fir smells terrific and is a delight to burn afterwards, whereas White Spruce smells like overjoyed tomcat. Tamarack, well, it's just not happening. Red Spruce (and maybe Norway?) is more or less the industry standard, i think - it's the 'vanilla'. Pines are nice and christmas-y but they tend to be rather sparse and poorly balanced unless you tack on a few extra branches to get that perfect comb-over look. On the other hand, unbalanced trees can be very good for corners where you want to tuck the bole as far back as poss (i usually pick a tree with a dominant side and then tether the top of the tree to the wall to prevent it from doing a Julie-Ann). >};

-thalweg

NEVER an artificial tree!!!

When I was a kid, our family used to go to the home of friends up in the Black Hills and cut our own tree; the expedition was as much a part of the tradition as the tree itself.

Our tree of choice was the Black Hills Spruce. The single most important criterion (aside from it being small enough to fit in the living room!) was that it be fairly full on all sides - no big gaps where branches were missing, a "well-rounded" tree.

I don't do a tree any more; seems rather silly when I'm the only one home, but I still have a large box of ornaments up in the attic, including some from my parents' first trees in the early 1900s. Part of a successful Christmas tree is tradition!

-Norm

Just a cautionary note if you intend to burn your spruce or fir after the holidays - there are little pockets of pitch (sap) at every place a branch comes off the trunk, and when the tree is burned, they will pop (explode!) and throw burning embers all over the place. Burn your tree only in an enclosed stove or with an ample fire screen, and have a bucket of water or a fire extinguisher handy. It's fun to listen to, rather like setting off a string of firecrackers, but never leave the fire unattended for even a minute!

-Norm

What about a live potted tree, to be replanted after the holidays, to help regreen the earth?

_Wolfgang

Nice idea... but it rarely works, unfortunately. At least, not with a tree of that size-range. Endemic trees (of the Christmas-y persuasion) need their 'seasons' in order to time their hormone-mediated biochemical processes such as directing nutrients to different types of tissue (e.g. ovary maturation vs. shoot growth or leaf production); they can neither be kept indoors in such a metabolically/reproductively static state nor face sub-freezing temperatures outside in a pot. Even bonzai'd conifers will die if not put out in a special cold-frame to overwinter. [and do keep in mind that the spread of roots of a healthy conifer is at least as wide as the spread of the branches - that'd be one big-ass flowerpot - hope you've got cathedral ceilings(!)]

Also, pure conifer stands *generally* have a low habitat value in terms of indices of biodiversity and of faunal biomass productivity. Re-greening of the Earth would in many cases involve optimizing the amt of 'edge' microhabitats in order to maximize habitat heterogeneity. So going into a pure spruce stand and cutting (killing) a young Yule Tree actually 'releases' the adjacent plants and trees by allowing greater light penetration, and (more often than not) increases the habitat value.

[the problem occurs when you have un-phased wholesale biomass extraction resulting in accelerated soil nutrient depletion. and of course, 'monoculture' just sucks anyway...]

-thalweg

It's a reference to all the pine cones being so er, obvious about things. And er, woody. The whole of botany is very sexy.

Back to subject-- ALWAYS an artificial tree. We put up a veritable grove of them indoors in every available space and decorate wildly. If we want scent we cook something or burn some incense. Thuja homegrown is our favorite. helgaleena

> Gymnosperms just means "naked seeds", that's all.

I was curious about the epistemological distinction b/n seed and spermatozoa, and i dug up this definition, which struck me as a bit paradoxical:

seminal:

1. of or containing seed or semen
2. of reproduction
3. like seed in being a source or a first stage in development; germinal; originative

Being 'pagan', i was more interested in tacit symbolic correspondences than in facile dictionary definitions. But let's go that way then: 'sperm' in almost all common usage refers specifically to the male gamete rather than the fertilized zygote. So why don't we simply use the word 'germ' when we mean the product of a male/female union, hence the word 'germinal'? And come to think of it, how did 'seed' ever come to have a masculine connotation, and why then was that idea extended (e.g. as the word 'seminal') to apply to the process of procreativity in general? It just strikes me as odd, when considered with the popular notion that women (i.e. 'womyn') are The Creative Gender. Maybe creating and nurturing shouldn't necessarily be taken to always be synonymous. (...but bare in mind that many of these 'objective scientific' terms were coined by wealthy victorian male scientists - perhaps not *wholly* unbiased in their gender assignations.)

In terms of sacred geometry, the ratio of the length of the emergent tap root to the length of the newly 'germinated' seed is a factor of the square root of 2 - this is the fundamental basis of the "Harmonic Expansion". The Harmonic Expansion was most rigorously expressed as the Lambda Series of the Pythagorean 'Just' musical scale [-geometrically speaking, multi-keyed instruments like pianos are by design equally out-of-tune in every key]. Root(5) by contrast, is the 'seed' of the "Geometric Expansion", upon which is based the proportions of the pentagram, the Golden Mean, and of course the perfect spiral (...and y'all thought that was Joe Namath, dincha!). Root(5) also relates to the distribution of leaves around a plant stalk, which brings me (by circuitous root, so to speak) back to xmas trees.

In Japanese tradition, the pine tree, the epitomical gymnosperm, is the embodiment of the Masculine Principle, while the cherry (no giggling, kiddies!), an angiosperm, is the vessel of the Feminine Principle. The subtle implication, to my mind, is that nekkidness somehow correlates to a lack of restraint upon free activity/creativity; it is Yang to the Yin of the concealment of the gonads - the concept almost seems Genetic (in the biblical sense). In European culture, a study of e.g. the Lewis Chessmen, circa 12thC, will reveal the persistence of the pinecone motif on the thrones of the kings. Now somewhere, i also came across a drawing of a typical 'priapic wand' (maybe in Buckland's Book of Witchcraft?? - it's been some 20-odd yrs since i read that); this staff was tipped with a stylized pinecone. The phallic parallels are pretty obvious.

So that makes me think two thoughts: One is that the scientist who derived the term 'gymnosperm' may have been unwittingly swayed by pagan undercurrents (such as dualistic thought), as i suspect was Carolus Linnaeus, the 'father' of taxonomic systematics (-How much do you wanna bet that this word was his coining??). The second is that maybe this whole tannenbaum thang is a holdover from a phallic cult, and symbolizes the emergence of a masculine principle that was eventually subsumed into an orthodox patriarchy.

But yeah - thanks for the elucidation, Tegwedd. ;}
-thalweg

ps: so now i'm wondering why a school for newbie X'ian priests is called a 'seminary'....

Here is another tree as gift site, this one from the Nature Conservancy:

http://support.nature.org/site/PageServer?pagename=brazil_gift_aaa&autologin=true

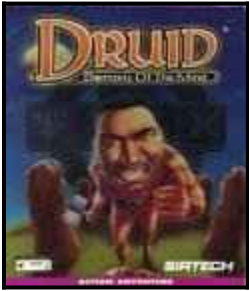
-Stacey

Hmmm. Is there any clause which specifies the type of tree or its source?

It's just that we recently had a sponsor-a-tree program operated through the local boyscout chapter which actually supplanted endemic 'Mixed Acadian Hardwood' species in favour of Norway Spruce, which is a non-native 'weed'

species. And wouldn't you know that the seedlings were genetic clones donated by a pulp & paper mega-corp (JD Irving, Inc). Also, the kids were not provided with gloves to protect them from the pesticides. But because the trees were 'donated' (i.e. as a tax write-off), all salient regulatory laws were circumvented. The depth of their evil cannot be plumbed.
-thalweg

GAME CORNER



Druid: Daemons of the Mind

(Originally published in the national edition of Computer Currents magazine. Reprinted here with permission of the author.)
by [Joe DeRouen](#)

One part Role-playing game, one part action, and one part adventure, *Druid: Daemons of the Mind* is by its very definition a hybrid game. Unlike most such experiments, however, this one succeeds admirably, and manages to combine the best parts of all three worlds while avoiding the worst. Sir-Tech, creators of the award-winning *Wizardry* series and long one of the leaders in the RPG genre, takes some chances with this title, but succeeds on almost every level, making this a game that anyone can enjoy despite their gaming background.

Druid's story revolves around four powerful Druid brothers: Lawson, Curak, Havnar, and Astor. Each druid is devoted to a particular element (earth, wind, fire, and water) and controls his own island inside the world of Navan. One of the many powers of the druids is the ability to instantly teleport to any place once they've seen it. Fearing a compromise in security, however, the brothers never visit each other, instead preferring to meet on common ground to discuss subjects of importance to Navan. Thus, when Lawson suddenly and mysteriously disappears, they aren't able to search his island for him. Instead they send you, the long-lost grandson of a druid, on a quest across the islands to find their missing sibling. This is just the beginning of *Druid*, which unfolds as your character solves puzzles, speaks to a multitude of different NPC's (non-player characters), fights monsters, and gains clues as to where Lawson might be.

Druid's interface is very simple, which might turn off a few hardcore gamers. But the lack of a complicated, hard-to-understand interface isn't a bad thing in this case, and the game more than makes up for it in playability, logical puzzles, a simple spell-casting system, and intense SVGA graphics, animation, and sound. The action is all controlled with the mouse (for example, to fight a monster, you simply click on it) and combat is relatively simple. One drawback is that all of this mouse-clicking gets a little tedious and it's often hard to click on objects you want to pick up if your character is standing too close to them. Despite these flaws, the game pretty much runs smoothly, and the plot moves along at a compelling rate while still giving you plenty to think about. *Druid: Daemons of the Mind* would make a nice addition to your shelf of titles, providing you with more than a little fun in the process.

MS-DOS 5.0 and up. List price: \$39.95. Sir-Tech, 800/447-1230.



What's a Blue Moon?

The trendy definition of "blue Moon" as the second full Moon in a month is a mistake.

by Roger W. Sinnott, Donald W. Olson, and Richard Tresch Fienberg

A rising full Moon lights the scene in *The Fishing Party*, painted by Fitz Hugh Lane after a visit to the coast of Maine in August 1850. That month contained a Fruit Moon, according to the Maine almanac's rules.

Recent decades have seen widespread popular embrace of the idea that when a calendar month contains two full Moons, the second one is called a "Blue Moon." The unusual pattern of lunar phases in early 1999 — two full Moons each in January and March, and none at all in February — triggered a groundswell of public interest. Countless newspapers and radio and TV stations ran stories about Blue Moons.

In an article ["Once in a Blue Moon"](#), folklorist Philip Hiscock traced the calendrical meaning of the term "Blue Moon" to the Maine Farmers' Almanac for 1937. But a page from that almanac belies the second-full-Moon-in-a-month interpretation.

With help from Margaret Vaverek (Southwest Texas State University) and several other librarians, we have now obtained more than 40 editions of the Maine Farmers' Almanac from the period 1819 to 1962. These refer to more than a dozen Blue Moons, and not one of them is the second full Moon in a month. What's going on here?

Blue Moons and the Seasons

Rays emanating from Tycho and other craters are particularly prominent when the Moon is full.
Courtesy Antônio Cidadão.

Several clues point to a strong connection between the almanac's Blue Moons and the four seasons of the year. All of the listed Blue Moons fall on the 20th, 21st, 22nd, or 23rd day of November, May, February, or August. These dates fall about a month before the Northern Hemisphere winter and summer solstices, and spring and fall equinoxes, respectively, which occur on similar day numbers.

Although the idea of a seasonal pattern suggested itself to us immediately, verifying the details required a lot of detective work. We found that the Blue-Moon definition employed in the Maine Farmers' Almanac is indeed based on the seasons, but with some subtle twists.

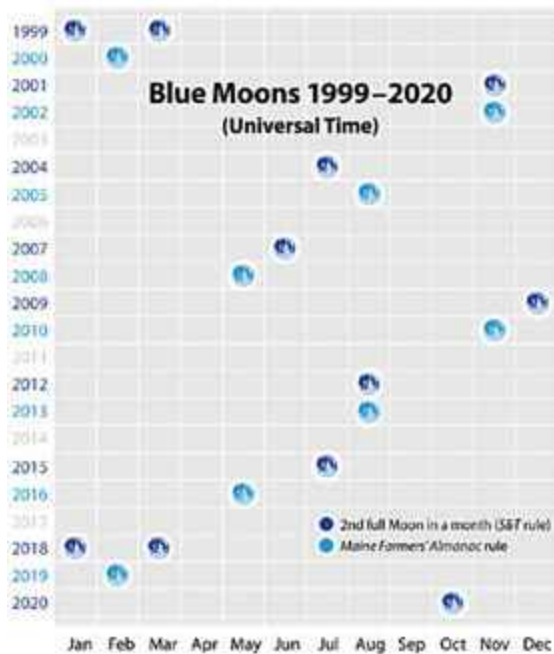
Instead of the calendar year running from January 1st through December 31st, the almanac relies on the tropical year, defined as extending from one winter solstice ("Yule") to the next. Most tropical years contain 12 full Moons — three each in winter, spring, summer, and fall — and each is named for an activity appropriate to the time of year (such as the Harvest Moon in autumn). But occasionally a tropical year contains 13 full Moons, such that one season has four rather than the usual three.

These tables appeared in the 1939 Maine Farmers' Almanac and show that the beginnings of the seasons were fixed by the 'R.A.M.S.' (right ascension of the mean Sun). The almanac lists separately the 'Turns and Crosses' of the apparent Sun, which executes a 'turn' from northward motion in declination to southward (or vice versa) at the solstices and 'crosses the line' (the celestial equator) at the equinoxes. Click on the table for a larger view.

The Seasons—Cardinal Points of the Year			
	Int. Date	Last Time	Meridian Zero
R.A.M.S. 18h. Winter begins, 1939,	Dec. 22	Th. 2h. 44m. eve.	
R.A.M.S. 0h. Spring begins, 1939,	Mar. 23	Th. 10h. 11m. eve.	
R.A.M.S. 6h. Summer begins, 1939,	June 23	F. 5h. 38m. morn.	
R.A.M.S. 12h. Autumn begins, 1939,	Sept. 22	F. 1h. 5m. eve.	
R.A.M.S. 18h. Winter begins, 1939,	Dec. 22	F. 8h. 32m. eve.	
Length of the year 365d. 5h. 48.7028m.			
The Sun, Turns and Crosses for 1939			
Eastern Standard Time Meridian 17h. west from Int. Date Line			
Mar. 21	Tu. 7h. 29m. morn.	Sun on equator ♄, crosses the line	
June 22	Th. 2h. 40m. m'n.	Runs high, northern tropic (turn)	
Sept. 23	Sa. 5h. 50m. eve.	Sun on equator ♃, crosses the line	
Dec. 22	F. 1h. 6m. eve.	Sun runs low, southern tropic (turn)	

Courtesy Maine Farmers' Almanac.

Today we usually mark the beginning of the seasons when the Sun's celestial longitude passes 0° (spring), 90° (summer), 180° (autumn), and 270° (winter). The Sun appears to move along the ecliptic at a variable rate because of the Earth's not-quite-circular orbit, so the seasons defined this way are not equal in duration. Another approach uses the dynamical mean Sun or fictitious mean Sun — imaginary bodies that move along the ecliptic and the celestial equator, respectively, at a constant rate and produces seasons of equal length. The Maine almanac defines the seasons using this alternative method. The almanac also follows certain rules laid down as part of the Gregorian calendar reform in 1582. The ecclesiastical vernal (spring) equinox always falls on March 21st, regardless of the position of the Sun. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, 46 days before Easter, and must contain the Lenten Moon, considered to be the last full Moon of winter. The first full Moon of spring is called the Egg Moon (or Easter Moon, or Paschal Moon) and must fall within the week before Easter.



When is the Moon 'blue,' in a calendrical sense? According to the Maine almanac, a Blue Moon occurs when a season has four full Moons, rather than the usual three. This type of Blue Moon is found only in February, May, August, and November, one month before the next equinox or solstice. According to modern folklore, a Blue Moon is the second full Moon in a calendar month. This type of Blue Moon can occur in any month but February, which is always shorter than the time between successive full Moons.

S&T illustration.

At last we have the "Maine rule" for Blue Moons: Seasonal Moon names are assigned near the spring equinox in accordance with the ecclesiastical rules for determining the dates of Easter and Lent. The beginnings of summer, fall, and winter are determined by the dynamical mean Sun.

When a season contains four full Moons, the third is called a Blue Moon.

Why is the third full Moon identified as the extra one in a season with four? Because only then will the names of the other full Moons, such as the Moon Before Yule and the Moon After Yule, fall at the proper times relative to the solstices and equinoxes.

Questions and Answers

During the period 1932 to 1957, under the editorship of Henry Porter Trefethen (1887-1957), the *Maine Farmers' Almanac* consistently listed Blue Moons derived from the convoluted seasonal rule just described. So where did the modern convention — that a Blue Moon is the second full Moon in a calendar month — come from? *Sky & Telescope* has, and is, the answer!

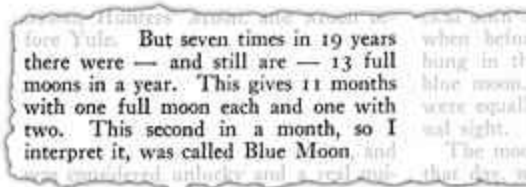
Laurence J. Lafleur (1907-66) of Antioch College, Ohio, discussed Blue Moons in a question-and-answer column in *Sky & Telescope*, July 1943, page 17, citing the 1937 *Maine Farmers' Almanac* as his source. It is clear that Lafleur had a copy of the almanac at his side as he wrote, since he quoted word for word the commentary on the August 1937 calendar page. This commentary notes that the Moon occasionally "comes full thirteen times in a year," but Lafleur did not judge whether this referred to a tropical year or a calendar year. More important, he did not mention the specific dates of any Blue Moons and never said anything about two full Moons in one calendar month.

Oops!

Some three years later, in March 1946, an article entitled "Once in a Blue Moon" appeared in *Sky & Telescope* (page 3). Its author, James Hugh Pruett (1886-1955), was an amateur astronomer living in Eugene, Oregon, and a frequent contributor to *S&T*. Pruett wrote on a variety of topics, especially fireball meteors. In his article on Blue Moons, he mentioned the 1937 *Maine almanac* and repeated some of Lafleur's earlier comments. Then, unfortunately, he went on to say, "Seven times in 19 years there were — and still are — 13 full moons in a year. This gives 11 months with one full moon each and one with two. This second in a month, so I interpret it, was called Blue Moon."

Pruett must not have had the 1937 almanac handy, or he would have noticed that the Blue Moon fell on August 21st (obviously not the second full Moon that month) and that 1937 had only 12 full Moons. But only in retrospect is his error so obvious.

Modern Folklore



James Hugh Pruett, in an article in the March 1946 issue of *S&T* may have started the second-full-Moon-in-a-month definition with this statement.

Sky & Telescope illustration.

Sky & Telescope adopted Pruett's new definition, using it in a note entitled "'Blue' Moons in May" on page 176 of the May 1950 issue. In a bizarre twist, the data on lunar phases for this note came from none other than H. Porter Trefethen of Winthrop, Maine, editor of the very almanac Pruett misread four years earlier! But Trefethen himself never called the second full Moon in a month a Blue Moon. The "'Blue' Moons" headline was likely added by *Sky & Telescope*'s founding editor, Charles A. Federer Jr. Federer agreed that he probably wrote that headline with Pruett's then-recent article in mind and without consulting Trefethen.

As Hiscock explained in the March issue, widespread adoption of the second-full-Moon-in-a-month definition followed its use on the popular radio program *StarDate* on January 31, 1980. We examined this show's script, authored by Deborah Byrd, and found that it contains a footnote not read on the air that cites Pruett's 1946 article as the source for the information. Byrd now writes for the radio program *Earth & Sky*, whose [Web site](#) contains a note giving her perspective on this modern contribution to lunar folklore.

With two decades of popular usage behind it, the second-full-Moon-in-a-month (mis)interpretation is like a genie that can't be forced back into its bottle. But that's not necessarily a bad thing. Rather than

argue over whether to celebrate the dawn of the new millennium on January 1st in 2000 or 2001, those with the sunniest outlooks will celebrate twice. Why not treat Blue Moons the same way, marking both the second full Moon in a calendar month and the third full Moon in a season with four? "Even if the calendrical meaning is new," said Federer, "I don't see any harm in it. It's something fun to talk about, and it helps attract people to astronomy."

NEWS CORNER



CENSUR Releases Report on ADF Druidism

http://www.cesnur.org/2006/sd_cooper.html For the Actual Report
[San Diego State University case study of Ár nDraíocht Féin](#)

The Center for Study on New Religions ([CESNUR](#)) has released a [report](#) about Ár nDraíocht Féin (ADF), one of the most widely spread forms of modern druidry or druidism. This paper called **A Pathway to Druidism** is the text of a paper read by Michael T. Cooper, Ph.D. (Trinity International University, Deerfield Illinois, USA) at the 2006 International CESNUR Conference. Unfortunately, I do not have permission to quote from it but hopefully my introduction will prompt you to head over to [CESNUR](#) and read it. My introduction and paraphrase follows:

The Introduction to the paper examines Druidism as one of the expresses of the Neo-paganism movement, whose ideals can be expressed as egalitarianist, pantheist and environmental responsible. He defines ADF as a typical example of North American neo-paganism that meets these ideals as well as the spirituality of North Americans.

Research Description

He explains the difficulties in collecting research data as well as the unreliability of the Internet as a data source, examining the culture of the cyber-community. He discusses the possible ethical considerations of using the Internet to gather data and then explains the methods by which he could.

Defining Druidry

He puts forward the two terms: revivalist and reconstructionist to define the two approaches to Druidry. He explains that ADF is typically a reconstructionist path, preferring to research history and archeology as well as the way that people lived and believed. He then quotes several definitions of Druidism from ADF members as well as Isaac Bonewits, the founder of ADF. He finishes by stating that ADF is a revivalist movement of Paganism.

Brief History of North American Druidry

Michael tells us how the ADF developed from the Reformed Druids of North America (the RDNA) and how Isaac Bonewits wanted his Druidry to be not just Pan-Celtic, but Pan-European. He then tells us how the leadership passed from Isaac. He discusses the growth patterns of the movement and estimates that today there are some 30,000 Druids in North America.

Pathways to Ár nDraíocht Féin

In this section he discusses the hows and whys of the path to druidic membership. He identifies three themes of motive that promoted the switch to ADF.

Disillusion with Western Christianity

In this section he quotes many examples of people's reasons for abandoning Christianity.

Religious Identity

Here he discusses the desire to establish a religious identity with other believers that involves both nature and ancestry.

Religious Legitimacy: Scholarship and Antiquity

He discusses the 18th Century Druidry revival as well as the paucity of historical data about the pre-Christian Druids.

Discussion of Pathways

He discusses the Lofland-Stark model of religious conversion and then investigates the discrepancies between the model and his test results of ADF members.

Congruency of Western Religious Belief and Druidry

In this section he sets the context in which ADF is to be set against the broad canvas of Western religious belief. He gives several tables that show the breakdown statistics of religious belief across North America.

Conclusion

In his conclusion (which I won't give away entirely 😊), he concludes that Druidry will continue to grow but it must stay congruent with North American culture.

What a fascinating article! I can only urge you to hop over to [CESNUR](#) and read it.

Two articles spread by OBOD through RDG Weblist



Meltdown Strategies: Financial Disaster & Climate Change

Feel free to repost this, just let me know where. And do check out the longer Climate Change Primer at:

http://www.earthactivisttraining.org/climate_resources.html

By Starhawk www.starhawk.org

While the financial markets have been melting down around us, another sort of meltdown has been occurring, one even more frightening and dangerous. Climate change has been progressing, more quickly than anticipated, fueled even more rapidly by methane bubbles released from a warming Arctic sea, in just one of the self-reinforcing cycles that will trigger unstoppable cascades of devastation unless we act now.

None of the presidential debates have addressed the central question of our time: can we transform our energy, our economy, our food systems and our culture rapidly enough to forestall complete global meltdown?

The present economic woes are frightening, but the environmental crisis is truly terrifying. With all the furor about falling markets and frozen credit, nothing real has changed in the economy. Granted, the repercussions will be that many of us have less money in our pockets and fewer opportunities. But we still have the natural resources we had a month ago. We still have our skills, our knowledge, and our productive capacity. What we've lost is a towering edifice of icing with no cake underneath.

But environmental meltdown means we lose the real basis of economy and survival. We will see more and more devastation like we've seen in the Gulf Coast. We'll see droughts, floods, lowered food supplies, huge losses in biodiversity and ecological resilience, rising seas that will take out major cities around the world, and all the associated problems of poverty, starvation, refugees and resource wars. Time is not running out-it's out! What we do now and in the next ten years is absolutely crucial.

The good news is, we don't have to take the path to disaster. We have the knowledge and technology we need to make the change. But our politicians, even the best of them, won't do it unless we make it a top priority.

To do that, it helps to know what the solutions are. In November, I'll be presenting at an interfaith conference on climate change called by the archbishop of Sweden. In preparation, I started writing a Climate Change Primer, trying to briefly list the most important technologies and approaches. It kept growing, and eventually became too big to send out as an email. But go to the link below and you can read it or download it as a PDF. If you want to better understand the issue and the spectrum of solutions we need to put into place, it's a good introduction. If you are a policy maker or an activist who likes to hound and harass policy makers to do the right thing, it's a good guide. And if you're thinking about how to invest your own time and energy and/or such dwindling funds as you might have, it will suggest fruitful avenues and new approaches. And here's the link:

http://www.earthactivisttraining.org/climate_resources.html

And below are a few short, short, short lists to help get us thinking about what priorities we should push for:

Things we can do right away in a lousy economy:

--Conserve. Obama almost said the 'C' word in the debate-and you would think this is something radicals, liberals and conservatives would all agree on, as it requires no funding or investment and can produce huge rewards. If we had continued to conserve energy at the rate we did in the 1970s, we would be energy independent today!

--Pass tax credits for renewables.

--Enact fuel efficiency standards for new cars, trucks, etc. and for all big users of fossil fuels.

--Require energy efficiency in new construction, and white or reflective roofs, porous paving, etc.

--Put caps on carbon emissions for big users that will decline over time to zero by 2050 or sooner. (There's a longer discussion of this in the Primer.)

--Take up Al Gore's challenge to generate 100 per cent of our energy from renewables within ten years.

--Sequester carbon by building healthy soil through organic farming, no-till techniques, and planned rotational grazing. (More on this on the website.)

--Localize economies and food systems-farmers' markets, CSAs, city farms and community gardens. Support barter systems and local currencies.

--End subsidies for nuclear energy, coal and oil.

--Bring the troops home-war has a carbon cost as well as a human cost and a financial cost. Employ diplomacy, not troops.

--Ratify Kyoto-no, it's not nearly enough but gosh, if we can't even do that, how are we going to have any global credibility on this issue?

Low Hanging Fruit: (Technologies and solutions that are already up and running, or nearly so, that have the best Energy Return on Energy Investment, will meet the least resistance and will give the biggest bang for the buck in the short run.)

--Onshore and offshore wind-already up and running.

--Photovoltaics-larger scale production to bring down costs, tax credits, rebates and cost-share programs for new construction and retrofitting.

--Concentrated Solar Power and solar thermal on both large scale and home scale.

--Electric cars and plug-in hybrids-in production or on the verge. Economies of scale-government purchasing agreements, tax credits, rebates or cost-shares or loan guarantees for purchasers can help replace our current transport fleet. Mandates for energy efficiency and requirements for zero-carbon vehicles, as were once in place in California, can support their production and adoption.

--Biofuels from waste and recycled materials and algae.

--White roofs. (A study from the Lawrence Berkeley labs suggest that white roofs not only save cooling costs but radiate heat outward and on a large scale, could have a major impact.)

--Regenerative farming and grazing that build soil organic carbon.

--Forest protection-a moratorium on the logging of old growth. Tree planting and restoration.

--Localization-building local food economies, sense of place, encouraging famers' markets, urban agriculture, local small businesses, walkable neighborhoods,

--Pedestrian zones, bike paths, good interface with bikes and public transport-safe parking areas, allowing bikes on subways and busses.

Vital Investments: Even in a lousy economy, we absolutely need to do these things, and they will provide jobs and a vital economic stimulus:

- The national grid needs to be upgraded to be able to handle distributed sources of energy and Vehicle to Grid technology.
 - Infrastructure for renewables needs to be built on the large scale.
 - Technical help to developing countries: It's only fair, equitable and good long-term security to help developing countries skip the 19th and 20th centuries and leap into the 21st with renewable energy sources. Offer to replace Iran's nuclear plants with solar infrastructure, China's coal plants with wind.
 - Cost share programs and rebates for retrofitting existing homes for energy efficiency.
 - Training programs and green jobs in the inner city.
 - Job training for the unemployed in green industries and regenerative agriculture.
- Long term investments: (Things we need to invest in now for the long term future. If we're going to borrow billions, let's spend them on:)
- Public transportation in and around cities. Making it efficient, cheap, easy and fun.
 - Trains, busses, and other forms of transport to get people out of their cars.
 - Research on all the promising technologies: new batteries and forms of energy storage, wave and tidal power, hydrogen from renewables-as a store for energy and as a replacement fuel for air travel. Aquaculture to produce biofuels. And so many more.(see that website for the full list!)
 - Public infrastructure.
 - Retrofitting of existing buildings for energy efficiency.
 - Forest and wildland protection in large blocks to allow plants and animals room to migrate in response to climate change. Habitat protection and restoration.
 - Quality education at every level on the environment.

Really Stupid Ideas We Should Oppose:

- Nuclear Power: It's not quick to build or license safely, it's not safe-low level radiation is proven to cause cancer and other diseases. We still don't know how to safely store the wastes. To build a plant we actually produce huge amounts of carbon emissions as cement is one of the big carbon hogs.
- Nuclear power plants provide new targets for terrorists and makes it difficult to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons. And-we don't need it!
- Offshore drilling and drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge-The U.S. has 3% of the world's oil reserves and uses 25% of the energy. We can't drill our way into energy independence, and drilling that compromises the safety of fragile ecosystems can cause irreparable damage for small, short-term gains. We need to wean ourselves off fossil fuels, not drill for more. And new oil fields won't come on line for over a decade and require huge energy investments to develop.
- "Clean" coal: There is no such thing.
- Cutting down rainforests to produce corn or palm oil for biofuels --Replacing food crops with fuel crops.
- Solving problems with guns and weapons.

Okay, this short list has already gotten long. Again, that link is:

http://www.earthactivisttraining.org/climate_resources.html

And if there's one important message we send, make it this:

The environment is not an afterthought: it's the ground of economy, security and survival. Environmental protection, environmental justice and regeneration must be our top priorities, because they are the only sound foundation for every other endeavor.

Starhawk is a lifelong activist in peace and global justice movements, a leader in the feminist and earth-based spirituality movements, author or coauthor of ten books, including *The Spiral Dance*, *The Fifth Sacred Thing*, *Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising*, and her latest, *The Earth Path*.

Starhawk's website is www.starhawk.org, and more of her writings and information on her schedule and activities can be found there.



Nature Loss 'Dwarfs Bank Crisis'

By Richard Black

Environment correspondent, BBC News website, Barcelona

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7662565.stm>

The global economy is losing more money from the disappearance of forests than through the current banking crisis, according to an EU-commissioned study.

It puts the annual cost of forest loss at between \$2 trillion and \$5 trillion.

The figure comes from adding the value of the various services that forests perform, such as providing clean water and absorbing carbon dioxide.

The study, headed by a Deutsche Bank economist, parallels the Stern Review into the economics of climate change.

It has been discussed during many sessions here at the World Conservation Congress.

Some conservationists see it as a new way of persuading policymakers to fund nature protection rather than allowing the decline in ecosystems and species, highlighted in the release on Monday of the Red List of Threatened Species, to continue.

Capital losses

Speaking to BBC News on the fringes of the congress, study leader Pavan Sukhdev emphasised that the cost of natural decline dwarfs losses on the financial markets.

"It's not only greater but it's also continuous, it's been happening every year, year after year," he told BBC News.

"So whereas Wall Street by various calculations has to date lost, within the financial sector, \$1-\$1.5 trillion, the reality is that at today's rate we are losing natural capital at least between \$2-\$5 trillion every year."

The review that Mr Sukhdev leads, *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity* (Teeb), was initiated by Germany under its recent EU presidency, with the European Commission providing funding.

The first phase concluded in May when the team released its finding that forest decline could be costing about 7% of global GDP. The second phase will expand the scope to other natural systems.

Stern message

Key to understanding his conclusions is that as forests decline, nature stops providing services which it used to provide essentially for free.

So the human economy either has to provide them instead, perhaps through building reservoirs, building facilities to sequester carbon dioxide, or farming foods that were once naturally available.

Or we have to do without them; either way, there is a financial cost.

The Teeb calculations show that the cost falls disproportionately on the poor, because a greater part of their livelihood depends directly on the forest, especially in tropical regions.

The greatest cost to western nations would initially come through losing a natural absorber of the most important greenhouse gas.

Just as the Stern Review brought the economics of climate change into the political arena and helped politicians see the consequences of their policy choices, many in the conservation community believe the Teeb review will lay open the economic consequences of halting or not halting the slide in biodiversity.

"The numbers in the Stern Review enabled politicians to wake up to reality," said Andrew Mitchell, director of the Global Canopy Programme, an organisation concerned with directing financial resources into forest preservation.

> "Teeb will do the same for the value of nature, and show the risks we run by not valuing it adequately."

A number of nations, businesses and global organisations are beginning to direct funds into forest conservation, and there are signs of a trade in natural ecosystems developing, analogous to the carbon trade, although it is clearly very early days.

Some have ethical concerns over the valuing of nature purely in terms of the services it provides humanity; but the counter-argument is that decades of trying to halt biodiversity decline by arguing for the intrinsic worth of nature have not worked, so something different must be tried.

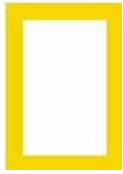
Whether Mr Sukhdev's arguments will find political traction in an era of financial constraint is an open question, even though many of the governments that would presumably be called on to fund forest protection are the ones directly or indirectly paying for the review.

But, he said, governments and businesses are getting the point.

"Times have changed. Almost three years ago, even two years ago, their eyes would glaze over.

"Today, when I say this, they listen. In fact I get questions asked - so how do you calculate this, how can we monetize it, what can we do about it, why don't you speak with so and so politician or such and such business."

The aim is to complete the Teeb review by the middle of 2010, the date by which governments are committed under the Convention of Biological Diversity to have begun slowing the rate of biodiversity loss.



National Geographic Finds Crystal Cave in Mexico

Photograph by Carsten Peter, Speleoresearch & Films [National Geographic November 2008](#)

When I saw this photo in the magazine my first thought was, "Oh my goodness, wonders still exist in the world that are undreamt of by myself." I couldn't stop showing the photo to others in the room. I wondered "Is it real?" but I check a few other sites, and it is.



From Geopedia

The largest known gypsum crystals in the world are found in a cavern deep below northern Mexico's Chihuahuan Desert. Made of selenite, a transparent, colorless form of gypsum, these giants have grown to astonishing proportions—several exceed 30 feet (10 meters) in length. The longest, the Crystal Cien, measures 37.4 feet (11.4 meters)!

The dazzling discovery of the Cave of Crystals, as it's called, was made by two miners excavating an exploratory tunnel inside the Naica mine, almost a thousand feet below the surface (300 meters). Owned by the Peñoles company, Naica is Mexico's most productive lead mine. Other caves, with smaller crystals, have been found in the mine, beginning in 1910, when the Cave of Swords was discovered at a depth of 394 feet (120 meters).

Upon learning of the cave, scientists around the world wanted to know how the crystals had grown so large. The answer lies in the unusual environmental conditions in which they developed.

For about 600,000 years mineral-rich water filtered through the cave, depositing molecules of calcium sulfate like stacked bricks. At first an intrusion of magma deep below the surface superheated the water. Then around half a million years ago the water

temperature cooled to roughly 136 degrees Fahrenheit, the right temperature for the calcium sulfate in the water to form selenite crystals. Conditions in the water-filled cave remained virtually unchanged for hundreds of thousands of years, allowing the crystals to reach astounding sizes.

Around 1985 miners unknowingly drained the water from the cave as they lowered the water table in the mine with pumps. No longer immersed, the crystals stopped growing, although they would start growing again if water were allowed to return.

For now the cave is secured by the company with a heavy steel door to protect against looters and environmental damage from the mine's ventilation system. Few people are allowed into the cave for two important reasons. First, it's exceedingly hot and humid, and people who enter without special cooling suits risk dying of heatstroke. Second, because gypsum is so soft (it has a hardness of 2 on the Mohs' scale), it can be easily scratched and damaged by tools, boots—even a fingernail.



Samhain: Witches, Druids, and other Pagans Honor the Dead

<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Samhain-Witches-Druids--by-Rady-Ananda-081029-216.html>

This article borrowed several pieces from the RDNA

Tis the season opener when the US begins its annual spending, feeding, partying, celebrating, decorating frenzy that includes a nod, usually, to the God of our understanding. One of my favorite holidays is Samhain (pronounced sow' en), which I usually practice as a Halloweener – dressing up in some costume that portrays a fantasy. Make-believe has always been fun to me. This year I decided to give more than a nod to my paganism by calling on our more serious practitioners for essays on the subject.

This compendium describes aspects of Samhain, its history, its traditions and how individual Pagans view the celebration. I claim no authority on the subject, but merely serve as an editor to the many articles submitted in response to my request. I am grateful for everyone's thoughtful submissions. My hope is to capture a snapshot of this multi-faceted religion for the interest of OEN readers.

Witch Deborah Oak Cooper, a member of the Reclaiming collective, told the San Francisco Chronicle, "There's no clearinghouse. It's the most disorganized religion, and that's part of the appeal." [SFGate's Susan Fornoff explains](#), "So there are Neopagans and Wiccans and Rosicrucians, Faeries, Druids, Gardnerians, Asatru, worshipers of the God, worshipers of the Goddess, worshipers of nature."

Samhain marks the new year when Pagans honor their ancestors. Of the three-day celebration, the second day is neither part of the old year nor part of the new. Mythologically, it is the day when the veil between the living and the dead is thinned, and communication between the two worlds is possible. I've paraphrased others to give an overview.

Emmon Bodfish explains that "Samhain marked the absolute end of the harvest" culminating in an all-night party replete with food, song, games, ceremony and elections:

"Like New Year's Celebrations everywhere, Samhain festivities fall into two sequential phases; one that signifies a return to Chaos, e.g. disposal of old gods, expelling of evil, reversal of usual habits of behavior, parties, suspension of taboos, and the return of the dead, all on Samhain night; and a second which signifies re-birth of the Cosmos and creation anew, e.g. lighting of new fires, beginning of a new season, inauguration of new ceremonies, and installation of new leaders."

Isaac Bonewits and Robert Larson write: "Samhain is summer's end, the eve of All Saint's Day, All Hallow's Evening or Halloween. It is the beginning of the winter half of the year and is known as the Day Between Years. The day before Samhain is the last day of the old year and the day after Samhain is the first day of the new year (though for clarity's sake, most Druids assign each Samhain to the year following it). Being a day "between years," it is considered a very magical night, when the dead walk among the living and the veils between past, present, and future may be lifted in prophecy and divination."

Druids, according to [one source](#) comprise "An order of male and female priest-philosophers of pre-Christian Celtic society, known in Continental Europe, the Mediterranean basin, Great Britain, and Ireland; often thought to be comparable to Roman flāmines or the brahmins of India. According to classical commentators, druids in Gaul, and perhaps elsewhere, had authority over divine worship, officiated at sacrifices (including, perhaps, human sacrifices), exercised supreme authority over legislative and judicial matters, and educated élite youth along with aspirants to their order.

Bodfish continues:

"In the Druid afterlife, people and gods mingled in a sunny world, but outside of time. There is no one god of the dead comparable to Pluto or Hades. The Druid afterlife is more an Other World than an Under World, in which gods and people mingle in a timeless dimension. All the gods, and one's

own merits and clan connections seem to determine one's place at the perpetual feast in the Isle of the Ever Young."

In this collection:

A Crone offers a detailed look into how she and co-religionists celebrate, honor, and mourn ancestors and Beloved Dead: M. Macha NightMare, [Why I Love Samhain](#) (3,075 words);

A Pacific Northwest Pagan contemplates the season of Samhain and its meaning in her life: Renee Randol, [The Season of Samhain](#) (143 words);

Suggestions on how to honor ancestors are given: Mike the Fool, [How to Honor Ancestors](#) (975 words);

A Druid considers sacrifice: Mortus, the Morose Druid, [A Few \(?\) Thoughts About Samhain and Sacrifice](#) (2,774 words);

Reflections on a hand fast anniversary, and the pursuit of happiness, are made: Justin Staley, [Being a Pagan this Halloween](#) (808 words);

An Arch Druid gives querulous voice to the season: Helgaleena Healingline, [Samhain Up](#) (622 words);

One practitioner explains the connection between bobbing for apples and Halloween: Stacey Weinberger, [Apples of Samhain](#) (1,128 words); and

A featured essayist in *Druid Missal-Any Magazine* details how the Reformed Druids of North America honor the dead during Samhain: Emmon Bodfish, [The Other World](#) (826 words).

Perhaps this batch of articles covers most questions any curious minded folk have about Pagans and Samhain. Much thanks to [DarkLady](#) for reaching into communities and soliciting Samhain articles, and for fielding the offerings. I hope to present a similar type of collection for the Winter Solstice. Let me know what you think.

Blessed be.



Beavers are Back in Scotland

For the first time in 400 years, the beaver has returned to Great Britain.

Four wild beaver families arrived at London's Heathrow airport Thursday night, the first step in an effort to reintroduce the mammals -- probably hunted to extinction around the reign of King James I, in the 16th or 17th century -- to the British countryside.

The beaver families, which were trapped in Norway after several months of careful observation, will be quarantined for six months

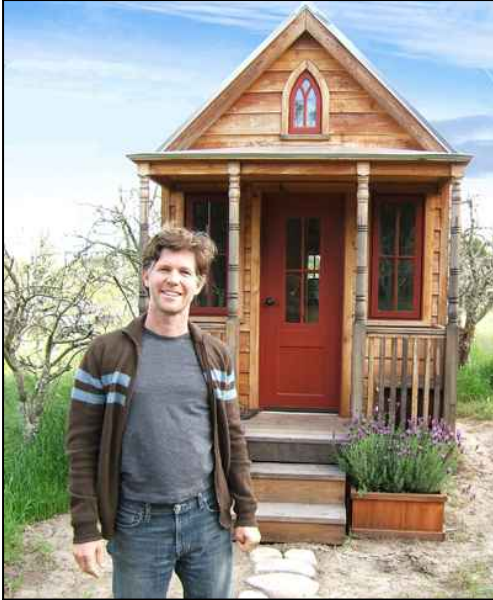
before being released in western Scotland.

"This is the latest stage in a truly exciting development for wildlife watchers, not just in Scotland but around the world," said Michael Russell, Britain's minister for environment. "I am sure the beavers are awaiting their release from quarantine... as keenly as I am."

Conservationists and wildlife advocates hope the reintroduction of the beaver will spark a further restoration of natural habitats in the British isles.

"Beavers hold the potential to create new wetland habitats which in turn increases the appeal to other native species," said Simon Jones of the Scottish Beaver Trial, which is overseeing the project. "We are excited to get the trial under way and see what benefits beavers can bring to Scotland."

Editor's Notes: Maybe they'll also reintroduce the wolf (17th century), the bear (8th century), the mountain lion (10th century), the aurochs (9th century), the giant otter (9th century), the walrus (5th century) and the wild striped Haggis (17th century)



Tiny Homes for Small Budgets

Bigger is better? Not if you don't have the money.

You want space? Go outside after you wake up.

As part of the Druid Inquirer's commitment to simpler living, I ran across some resources for people who toss the clutter, dump the mortgages and down-size their living arrangements.

The photo here is from www.tumbleweedhouses.com

Read the blog www.tinyhouseblog.com for other great links and video clips.

It would also make a great Druid club house on those remote grove sites.

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