



CroneTimes

WWW.CRONESCOUNSEL.ORG

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Gay Barker here. Plans are well under way for **CRONES COUNSEL XVI** in **Seattle,**

September 17-21. All the wonderful traditions we cherish will be there plus some intriguing surprises. The workshops are shaping up to be exceptional, the accommodations all you could ask for, and the energy and enthusiasm are rising every minute. Everything from the opening ceremonies to the closing breath, we believe, will engage your hearts and minds.

Don't forget to book your complimentary bus trip on Saturday the 20th. Please be thinking of which bus you would like to take, one will go to Seattle Center, and the other to Pike Place Market. There will be lots to do at both locations so let your imaginations run wild. Diane Woodworth will be sending out more details of things to do and see in the pre-event packets.

For those who want to keep their walking distance short, I suggest taking the bus to Seattle Center because "Ride the Ducks" is very close and this is a one and a half-hour tour on a World War II amphibious vehicle that stays on land for one hour and half-hour in the water. (There is a charge for this tour.) Please check the box on your registration form and get it off as soon as possible because we will need a head count for the bus company before our event.

To secure your place at **CRONES COUNSEL XVI**, register with Meera Messmer, (520/760-3905 or Gmessy2@aol.com) or by credit card online at www.CronesCounsel.org by **August 12th for \$175. After August 12th registration is \$200.**

For all our mental health, please make your hotel reservations as soon as possible so that we insure our room quota at **South Center Doubletree Suites** (single or double \$139,

Hear Ye! Hear Ye!
Calling all Crones!
CRONES COUNSEL XVI
Seattle, Washington
Sept. 17 to 21, 2008

triple \$149, quad \$159) by credit card at central reservation 800/222-8733 or at the hotel directly 206/ 575-8220, www.seattle.doubletree.com

Come prepared to sing, dance, and drum. Remember to bring your costumes to join in on the fun at the follies. A wonderful evening of song featuring Betsy Rose and the one and only Seattle Rolling Crones is planned for Friday night! The dynamic and moving beat of Simone LaDrumma's artistry will again open the festivities. Our own Mahtowin will be back to facilitate the storytelling, and the artisans among us will be bringing wondrous things for us to take home if we wish. Don't forget the

give-away table. Bring something you prize (but are ready to release) and take home someone else's treasure.

Come join the fun and frolic, the tears and laughter. Renew old friendships, make new ones, and spend five days with wonderful women you won't experience anywhere else!

WORKSHOPS, CIRCLES, MARKETPLACE

ALL WORKSHOPS, PROGRAMS, CEREMONIES, AND WISDOM CIRCLE LEADERS ARE GIFTED TO THE GATHERING BY WOMEN WILLING TO SHARE THEIR WISDOM AND CREATIVITY. OUR GATHERING RELIES ON THESE WONDERFUL WOMEN.

To gift Crones Counsel XVI, contact:

WORKSHOPS: Workshop offerings may be mailed to Connie Dawson, 4966 S. Carlie Drive, Langley, WA 98260 or cdawson@whidbey.com

CRONE CIRCLE LEADERS: For Crone Circle information, please contact Gay Barker, 12553 C St., Mt. Vernon, WA 98273 or gaybarker@wavecable.com

CRONE MARKETPLACE: For artisan information, please contact Vita Laumé, vitalaume@comcast.net or call 360/491-5064

President's Message

by Nancy Lehto

Springtime is here in the Rockies. Some days are warm and tulips are blooming. Other days, like today, we have six inches of snow on the ground, and the tulips just peeking through. It is the time of year for new life and growth but all in good time. We bow to Mother Nature's will.

For me, Crones Counsel is the best of times. I am looking so forward to the next gathering in Seattle. September is a beautiful month in Washington. The trees are changing color and the rainy season is yet to come. With blue skies above and the scent of the nearby ocean, this will be a magnificent place for our gathering. The Doubletree Hotel is very accommodating. Each room is a mini-suite complete with a small refrigerator and sitting room. Very comfortable. There are lots of nearby restaurants to enjoy, as well as a very nice coffee shop in the hotel. Join us for our sixteenth Crones Counsel Celebration of Wise Women.

My local circle, the Colorado Crones — Circle of Wise Women — is making good use of time this year. We are planning our first annual retreat for July. So far, twelve women have signed up for a weekend away. We found a wonderful retreat center run by Benedictine Sisters that has a labyrinth, a large meeting room, plenty of bedrooms, and is set in the piney woods of the Black Forest, just north of Colorado Springs. We have moved our annual Croning ceremony to October. Each month we meet together for lively discussions, or perhaps a craft project or event. It's always fun and energizing being with my Crone sisters.

It may seem like the Crones Counsel board sometimes takes too much time to get things done. But some things just can't be hurried. We finally have a new



website. It's been a slow process to get it all organized and make the transition. Our website www.cronescounsel.org is more user friendly and makes it easier to register on-line for the gathering. If you have any suggestions about the website, please send them along to me.

We have been fortunate to have several women's groups step forward to ensure that our Crones Counsel gatherings continue. Our seventeenth gathering in 2009 is in the planning stages. Our eighteenth gathering in 2010 is being discussed. We anticipate a group submitting a proposal for the nineteenth gathering in 2011, and another group getting their proposal together to celebrate our twentieth anniversary in 2012. If your group is interested in planning a Crones Counsel national gathering, please let me know so that I can send you a comprehensive planning guide. If you feel your group is too small to undertake such an event, please consider partnering with either the board of directors or another group.

As always, I am interested in your thoughts and ideas around supporting our Crone sisters. What else would help you connect with others? The board is listening and open to ideas. Either write

to me or any other board member. And please join us for the CC XVI Town Meeting, a sharing of ideas among all participants of the gathering and a place to ask questions of the board.

I look forward to seeing you in Seattle.

CRONES COUNSEL Marketplace

T-SHIRT:

Silkscreened with our beautiful logo printed on a silver gray shirt. Available in all sizes. \$18.00, includes shipping.

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Pre-order your Crones Counsel Calendar for 2009. Large-format, full-color calendar with important dates (including Crones birthdays). \$20.00, includes shipping.

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Becoming a Crone

by Ann Emerson, age 94, Anacortes, Washington



My mother was born in 1882, during the ending years of the Victorian era. She grew to womanhood under the heavy hand of the patriarchy which put extreme restraints on women. I grew up under those beliefs. Women tend to teach their daughters what their mothers taught them.

I believed men had all the power. A women's only financial and social security depended on attracting the most desirable man she could get to marry her and holding him fiercely against other women. This pitted us against each other. Only school teaching or domestic work careers were open to most and paid little. Being an Old Maid was unthinkable and a disgrace, dooming you to being unpaid help to some family member. We absolutely had to be virgins or no man would marry us.

I accepted the restraints. I strove to be "a lady" and to be as acceptable as I could to men, being careful never to offend one, which caused difficulty in fending passes. Being poor, from a small town and the wrong side of the tracks, we didn't have much social life. I was timid, uncertain and didn't feel I was pretty, so my experience in secondary school didn't help throw off this oppressive conditioning.

Fortunately for me I had an attractive and talented older sister who, during the depression, took the only job available to her — traveling as a flagpole sitter and then sky dancer, performing with a partner on a platform high up on a flagpole. She brought me to California for a sister act, bought me becoming clothes, taught me etiquette and social graces. These stood me in good stead as the depression slowly lifted and I was able to get secretarial and editing work, then scholarships and a college education.

I married a Canadian graduate student in Anthropology moving with him to Toronto where he was called to be a University Professor. There came three children in fourteen months, one by adoption, and my middle years were consumed with being a wife, housekeeper, and mother on a limited budget. I tried to teach my daughter Lynn to be a lady, but it was the sixties, I had no success.

My husband died of a stroke when I was in my early sixties. Through helping a son-in-law financially, I was forced into bankruptcy, lost my home and everything, except my pensions. I decided to let my children make it on their own and to find out who I was apart from a wife and mother, moving back to a different state in my native land where I knew no one except a brother and his family two-hundred miles away.

After settling, I attended a founding meeting of Crone of Greater Skagit Valley. I became a founding member and am now its elder. I started a discussion circle and facilitated it with success for twelve years. We grew to thirty-two members.

I subscribed to *Crone Chronicles*, began to read about Crone and was shocked to see an account of a woman taking off her blouse and dancing half naked, showing off her mastectomy at one of the first Counsels.

Not long after that Crone of Puget Sound put on an early Counsel. I could have gone; Seattle is only ninety miles away. I was offered a ride. But I didn't think I wanted to go where women were carrying on like that!

Crone gradually worked its freeing education on me. I have come to understand what the patriarchy did to my mother and to all women. I have watched progressive women throw off the prudery restraints and limitations, which I came to realize I had imposed on myself. I have attended a number of Counsels, thoroughly enjoying them, even getting a reputation for telling naughty jokes at the follies.

Sadly I watched egos and personal agendas take over from principles and with gossip and innuendo split our Crone. I was told I was a detriment there, because in my passion for peace at the start of the war I put in our Newsletter an article by a 93-year-old Crone, which offended wives of military members at a nearby Naval Base. I left as requested.

For fourteen years now I have observed older women getting education and taking up professions, seeing what it has done for their lives. Women in numbers joining the workplace, the feminist movement, many wonderful women's organizing work, writings and workshops and seminars, and now the Internet have made great strides in freeing us from the patriarchy's hold.

The tide has turned. Yet much is still to be done and Crone, if we have done our inner work, is still the force that has the time, perspective, life experience, wisdom, compassion, and vision to lead the way. I am proud to be a Crone and to celebrate my aging with purpose, power, passion, and pride. I have learned not to judge others by my limited standards, but to embrace everyone with acceptance, and insofar as I can give it, unconditional love. It is a joyous, interesting, fulfilling way of life and I am grateful to the Crone movement for blazing the trail for us.

CRONES COUNSEL MISSION STATEMENT

To reclaim the Crone archetype through the creation of gatherings of women which model processes that: *promote equality, encourage diversity, support empowerment, and honor the value to society of older women's wisdom and accomplishments.*

An Elegantly Aged Woman Who Can Cherish Life

by *ila Benavidez-Heaster*

Seated in a huge, overly cold meeting room, I huddled over my body, trying to conserve my body heat. As I glanced around, I wondered what I had gotten myself into this time. In front of me, I saw a stage displaying beautifully crafted artwork and a huge mother drum. Everywhere I looked there were women, women, women. A wild excitement was in the air. I continued to scan the room. What I noticed were the beautifully hued colors that the women were wearing. They were exuding an energy that was radiating beyond their physical bodies, which created a colorful kaleidoscope of living, pulsating women. I listened to their voices raised in conversations as it filled the room with a deafening staccato beat. There were close to 350 women and I only knew two of them and they were buried somewhere within this crowd. And my native, deeply recessed within my being, was basking in the soul quenching of my long-held thirst. I was soaking in the pure ecstasy of being in the presence of these beautifully aged women.

The year was 1995 and I was at the Cronos Counsel in Scottsdale, Arizona. This was my first year and I would soon hear a number of the women say, “Oh you’re a virgin.” Little did I know “what” I would grow to understand from those words. Sitting, watching, listening; I was basking deeply in the women’s energy. And, yes, little by little, I began to open to the beauty around me. I had been yearning to attend this women’s gathering called the Cronos Counsel. And, now, I was finally in the room with the Crones. Oh my! I had heard the name Cronos Counsel in many of my women’s circles, and inside my head I had unconsciously translated it to Cronos Council. A great deal of time would pass before I understood that the word was “Counsel.” And, in the years to come, I would grow in understanding of what “Counsel” meant.

In my steady scanning of the room, I noticed a stunningly statuesque woman dressed in a colorful flowing robe who was walking to the stage. When she stepped on the stage she struck her beaters on the mother drum. A deep, slow measured, reverberating “thump, tha thump, tha thump” began to fill the room. As the heartbeat of the drum permeated the room, the staccato of voices fell into a hush and the performance began. I watched

the long, slender, exquisitely sculpted body of the storyteller, I found myself listening deeply, and then I felt a jolt in my body. Something was off. The amazing images that were flashed before our eyes were of young, slender, women. And the lone performer with her beautifully choreographed movements was telling the story of the young women. “Oh, oh . . .” I heard myself mutter internally “Where are the images of the old women?”

I could feel the tension building in that overly refrigerated room. My own tension was building, as the cold continued to seep even deeper into the marrow of my bones. To further irritate the situation, I was unable to let go of the lack of images of older women.

The disjuncture created by watching the living pulsating women and seeing the art images of the young women was disconcerting. At the same time, I became vividly aware that the energy of the group had gone into a lock down. The beautifully crafted performance came to an end. Silence. The women around me were not moving. Were they thinking similar thoughts to mine? I was numb, and at the same time, I was storming about inside my head trying to make sense of what I had just experienced. I don’t remember hearing any applause. I

know that I could not applaud because I was too deeply submerged in my thoughts as they battled within my mind. Over and over my internal mantra chanted, “Isn’t this to be the place where older women are to be seen and revered?”

At that point an exquisite older woman stepped onto the stage and began to speak. The women were clapping; it was clear that she was a woman of high regard. I sensed that she was “Bwana” the leader of the way. I was unable to give her my full attention because I was still preoccupied with the thoughts of what I had just taken place so I missed much of what she said. I sensed that she was welcoming us and she told us her name, which flew right over my head. Slowly, I began to focus on this full-bodied, white-haired woman and noticed that she exuded a fluid tender-loving grace. How smoothly she told us that this would be the time for storytelling and how it would work. Later I was to discover that this woman was Shauna Adix, a woman I would grow to love profoundly. But in the moment,



[AN ELEGANTLY AGED WOMAN, con't.. on Page 5]

AN ELEGANTLY AGED WOMAN [Con't. from Page 4]

was mesmerized by her graciousness and my irritated thoughts recessed to the back part of my brain. She opened the storytelling by asking who was willing to start. There was absolute silence in the room. No movement. No one stirred. The group appeared to be mired.

And, without thought, my arm went up of its own volition and words flew out of my mouth: "I'll give you a kick start." Good grief, who said that and who was leaping up the steps of the stage? There was no thought to my actions; I felt like I was being pushed forward. Then I was standing beside bwana-woman and she looked at me with a soothing smile and immensely kind eyes while she offered me a cape, which I did not take. I then asked "May I speak in my own language?" to which she agreed.

Moving to the front of the stage; I faced the women. Their power was palpable and, at the same time, their energy was tightly constrained. How strange, I was not frightened. I felt embraced by their intensity. Then my body softened of its own accord, I was no longer in my head, no longer thinking. I merged into my body movements of calling in the wind and my voice gave over to tonal sounding. How good my body felt to give over to the beautiful fluidity of the wind and to keen to all that is life. I began to feel a shift in the room. I felt the re-opening of the energy that had been locked down. The women got what I was doing. No explanation needed.

I was only up there for probably less than two minutes. I brought the expression to a close. As I was jumping off the stage, I felt a release in myself, as well as the energy in the room. The women erupted. They were standing, clapping, crying, shouting "thank you," yelling at the top of their lungs and throwing wadded paper my way. I will grow to recognize that as a standing ovation but in the moment, I was just trying to get back to my seat. As I sat back down, I had to bend over and cover my head because I was surrounded by a number of women who were boisterously hugging and more than exuberantly pounding my back. At the same time they were shouting into my ear, "Thank you!", "Yes," and all the words got mangled into an indistinguishable but wonderful appreciation.

As I untangled myself from the high-spirited women, I settled back in my seat and watched as Bwana-woman stepped forward from the back of the stage. She looked at me with shining eyes. I could not hear her words but they felt like they were swaddling me in love. The cold in the room could no longer penetrate my warmed heart. The worrisome thoughts dissipated in the joyous energy of the room. Bwana-woman then called forth the next storyteller. One of the women in the audience walked toward the stage and stepped up to give voice to her story. Now, the stories had begun. I sat back and listened. I began to do a deep soak of their stories. The authentic and genuine reflections of the joy,

pain, and struggles of what it means to be alive as a woman. This is the oral tradition that is "my familiar," a recognizable known to the cellular fabric of my body. I was home once again.

I spent the remaining days of the Crones Counsel basking in the wonder of these amazing women, many of them elders and some moving into elderhood. What deep soul satisfaction of having been well steeped in Crones energy. I was satiated. The days sped by at galactic travel time and the Crones Counsel came to a close. Leaving the hotel, I was waving and saying good-bye to the many women I had met, when I heard the Orcas Island women saying "Come see us some time." Who . . . me? Oh my heart was overflowing. Definitely, no longer a virgin, I had been opened and was in full abandonment to love.

Shortly thereafter, I was seated in a booth in the airport restaurant while I waited for my plane, I was madly writing in my journal. I was working through all my tumultuous emotions. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed two of the crones from the weekend. They were motioning for me to come join them. I was no longer in the shelter of the safe space of the Crones Counsel and had reverted to my reserved shyness. But their warmth was so magnetic that I found myself sliding into the chair beside them.

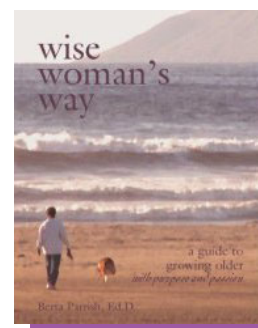
Conversation came easily with them. At one point they ask me how old I was and I responded with great pride that I was 55. They both tenderly chuckled, and with the most delightful melodic purrs said, "Oh, you're just a baby!" My eyes flew open along with my heart. Their words were soft and caring, and I joined them in their effervescent peals of laughter. When we could stop laughing, I asked them, "So, how old are you two?" They said in their '80s. Ah, there they were in the full beauty of the well aged. Yes, these were the old women treasuring the vulnerable tender part of my being, and I was the younger one soaking in their love. With a subtle lighthearted spontaneity they let me know I was cherished. Now, as I recall that memory, I am aware that I had been in counsel with these two beautiful crones.

I also had an epiphany during those last moments with those two most gracious crones; that a Crone is a woman who has aged so elegantly that she can cherish life. The memory is vibrant and stays with me to this day. Yes, being with these two stunningly beautiful old crones, opened me to the moment, and they had nudged me to the wonder of cherishing.

*Live by intuition and inspiration and let
your whole life be Revelation.*

— EILEEN CADDY

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MOST OF WHAT I KNOW, I LEARN ANEW FROM PRAIRIE DOGS!

by Enid "Meadowlark"



- ♪ Be proud of who you are.
- ♪ Enjoy standing up, looking around, and suddenly charging off in elegant bursts of speed.
- ♪ Choose your burrow wisely, and enjoy it.
- ♪ Know that you have a place in the Universe, but select it wisely.
- ♪ Use wisdom in surveying your territory for possible problems.
- ♪ Have a carefully detailed procedure for categorizing and evaluating threats.



- ♪ Evaluate new arrivals for friendliness or danger.
- ♪ Select your diet sagely; know your likes and dislikes.
- ♪ Savor your peer-companions, frolic with them, but let them know your boundaries.
- ♪ Go with the flow of life, accepting life's stages with grace and equanimity.

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Your name and the name of the person you are honoring will be printed in the next issue of *CroneTimes*. Please limit your wording to one line.

Send your wording and donation to **CRONES COUNSEL, INC., P.O. Box 485, Ekalaka, MT 59324**

CRONES COUNSEL, INC. is a 501(c)3 organization. Donations are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Planning a Gathering

by Patricia Layden



I am part of the planning committee for the Seattle Crones Counsel, and I want to tell you what fun it can be to plan a Gathering!

Honestly, the most important ingredient is enthusiasm! Add to that a creative group of women with the determination to brain-

storm ideas and listen to one another, and you are half-way there. Even if you don't know the other members of the committee that well in the beginning, you will find yourself in a group of friends in no time at all. I am the only one of us from South Seattle, and I am willing to drive an hour and a half just to be with this group. Lynn, another member of the committee, drives from Anacortes, or works through e-mail and phone contact. And it is all coming together beautifully!

There is a planning guide that takes the guesswork out of how to begin and what to do when, and a wonderful Board of women ready and eager to answer questions, make suggestions, and point one toward those who have gone before in various capacities. A big part of the fun of it all is in creating the theme for one's own area, flavoring it with ideas — for opening and closing, decorations, banner design, wisdom circles, honoring of the elders. If you were at Asilomar in 2007 you saw and heard our invitational song-and-dance routine to the tune of "Louie, Louie" ("Cronie, Cronie"). I can tell you, it was hilarious fun bringing that together!

So, I encourage anyone to think about your home area for a Counsel. If you know anyone at all who might like to get together and brainstorm, someone who might know someone else, and so on, it is, honestly, great fun. I have attended all but three of the Counsels, and have never been disappointed. You really can't fail if you enjoy the gatherings — all the elements are spelled out, and are in your memory and imagination. Give it a shot! I'm glad I did.

DVD REVIEW

"Strangers in Good Company"

by Kianna Bader

A small bus filled with seven elderly women breaks down in the Canadian wilderness. For several days, they are forced to live together in a deserted farmhouse. They have only their wits and their memories to sustain them until they share some roasted frog's legs. These interesting women are nonprofessional actresses and the dialogue is largely improvised. They share their real life stories and intimate thoughts. It's fascinating, humorous, and slow-moving, just like these old women. If you haven't seen *Strangers in Good Company*, I highly recommend it. It's a Canadian film available on DVD.

CRONES COUNSEL XVI — SEPTEMBER 17-21, 2008 — Seattle, WA

REGISTRATION FORM

2008 FEES:

Through August 12: \$175 After August 12: \$200

Please print clearly:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

E-mail: _____

We will communicate mostly by e-mail, so if you have it, PLEASE include your address.

BIRTHDATE: _____

We really need your birthday for our honoring of the elders ceremony so please don't forget to indicate it.

Is this your first time for Crones Counsel? Yes _____ No _____

How did you hear about Crones Counsel? _____

Special Needs? _____

Need a roommate? Yes _____ No _____ Smoking or Non-smoking? Please circle

SCHOLARSHIPS

I WISH TO SUPPORT MY WISE SISTERS WITH A DONATION OF:

\$25 _____ **\$15** _____ **\$10** _____ **Other** _____

OUTREACH FUND

I WISH TO SUPPORT THE OUTREACH FUND WITH A DONATION OF: \$ _____

Please include with your registration check. Thank you. Amount enclosed: \$ _____

SPECIAL OPTION: Round trip bus trip into downtown Seattle on Saturday afternoon for free time.

Please check: Yes No

Scholarships are available on a limited basis. For information on Scholarships and refunds, contact Registrar Gay (Meera) Messmer via e-mail (Gmessy2@aol.com), telephone 520-760-3905 or write her at 8055 E. Coronado Road, Tucson, AZ 85750

REFUNDS: Any cancellation up to July 31, 2008 will be refunded less a \$25 processing fee. No cancellation refunds after August 1, 2008.

Mail this form & registration check to: CRONES COUNSEL, INC. c/o Meera Messmer
8055 E. Coronado Road, Tucson, AZ 85750 Phone: 520-760-3905 E-mail: **Gmessy2@aol.com**

If you would like to pay by credit card, register online at **www.CronesCounsel.org**

On Page 8, please sign
Liability Waiver and Assumption of Risk Agreement

Waiver: Anyone attending a Crones Counsel gathering must sign a waiver of liability, just as you would if attending an Elder Hostel or other such outing.

Please sign and date the following waiver

LIABILITY WAIVER AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK AGREEMENT

I have read the activity description and voluntarily enroll in the Crones Counsel gathering. I understand and realize activities involved in the program involve risks, which may result in injury to me. I knowingly and voluntarily assume all such risk, which I may sustain in connection with the above program, including but not limited to injury sustained while traveling on highways and over rough terrain, forces of nature, falling, slipping, and any accident or illness, which may occur while I am enrolled in the program.

Furthermore, in consideration of the permission granted to me to participate in the above program, on behalf of myself, my heirs, legal representatives, I release and discharge Crones Counsel, Inc. and their officers, from liability for any injuries or property loss or damage I may sustain while participating in the above activity. I fully realize and accept the responsibility to myself and my companions to carry out all program activities according to Crones Counsel procedures and in a safe and prudent manner. This release does not apply to acts of gross negligence or wanton and reckless conduct.

I also agree I shall be responsible for any expenses incurred or damages suffered as a consequence of my personal injury or property loss or damage; that I shall carry adequate accident and health insurance for this purpose, and I shall not hold Crones Counsel, Inc. responsible for such expenses.

Signature

Date

New Cronos Website Debuts!

Check out www.cronescounsel.org for a brand new look to the Cronos Counsel website. After many years of dreaming of a new website and several months in the actual making, the website formally launched this month. New functions include a content management system where the web manager can update content, add pages, send an e-newsletter, create and manage blogs, upload photos, and view stats.

Registering for gatherings and shopping should be a breeze with the new site. Stay tuned as new content and information is added to the website throughout the early summer.

For more information contact **Cronos Counsel** board member and web manager, Suzanne Gruba, at suzgruba@gmail.com. For registration information contact Meera Messmer at gmessy2@aol.com.

ARTS & CRAFTS WOMEN WANTED

An Artisans' room will be available for women attending the gathering to sell their crafts and arts. The spaces are limited — apply early.

You must be registered for the gathering and products you sell must be your own creation.

For information contact:

Cronos Counsel – Artisans,
c/o Vita Laumé, 4943 Beverly Dr. NE,
Olympia, WA 98516, 360/491-5064,
vitalaume@comcast.net



Who Are We?

CRONOS COUNSEL, INC., is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring and celebrating the lives of older women. We use the word *Crone* to refer to and reclaim the original meaning of the term: A Crone is an elder woman who embodies wisdom, one who embraces both the light and the dark sides of her life. At our national gatherings, we conduct workshops, exchange information, and enjoy singing, dancing, and drumming. As we listen to each other's stories, we share laughter and tears, always honoring one another, especially the eldest in our midst. As a result, we are able to go out into the world with more power, knowledge, and energy for the paths that lie ahead.

CRONETIMES Our quarterly Members' newsletter.

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MARJORIE SPEECE

Settling into the Next Lifestyle

by Walta Ruff and Marji Nash



As we, Marjorie Speece, Walta Ruff, and Marji Nash, looked through the January 2008 *CroneTimes*, it was clear all attending were having the time of their lives. We dearly missed all of you.

On December 27, 2007, Marjorie took an emergency trip to the hospital. She was in the hospital until January 12 and then to the rehab/skilled nursing unit of the Good Samaritan Village (part of the same campus where her independent-living apartment was located).

She left skilled nursing February 11 and moved into her new assisted-living apartment — also part of the Good Sam Village campus. As Grace, one of our Fort Collin's cronos said, Marjorie is using her wisdom and courage for making best choices when necessary.

Our mother is settling into this next lifestyle; in fact, she says she has found her new niche. She has made the emotional and physical choices that go with this change: sorting out clothes, pots and pans, and collectibles that define a lifestyle she can no longer live; sorting out scrapbooks, picture albums, and piano music (she was able to take her piano with her to the new apartment). Mother is doing really well and has regained most of her strength and mobility. With much calm and energy she is facing the challenges of forever being connected to an oxygen supply and using her walker. She remains sharp as ever: last books read were: "A Thousand Splendid Suns" and "The Kite Runner," and she is right on top of the political issues and candidates.

Marjorie's address is:
2101 S. Garfield Avenue,
Apt. 418,
Loveland, CO 80537.

Thinking of you with Crone love and joy.



MARJORIE SPEECE, with daughters Marji Nash (on her right), and Walta Ruff (to her left)

EXCERPTS FROM

THE UNVEILING:

A personal journey through the first Crones Counsel

by Ann Kreilkamp

First published in Crone Chronicles, #18, Winter 1993.

Introduction:

130 women, from 16 states, ranging from 42 to 76, all identifying themselves as “crones,” gathered together for the first national “Crones Counsel.” Shauna Adix, 60 years old, was the organizer for this pioneering event. Back in 1972 she had founded the Women’s Center at the University of Utah, one of the very first in the country. Three years ago she retired. Ever since then, she has been meditating on the question, “What is Crone Work?” This event was Shauna’s initiation onto her new path. She and her group of 12 women in Salt Lake City worked for a year to bring us all together on Thursday evening, October 14, at the Snow King Resort in Jackson, Wyoming.

In the first few years, storytelling took up three hours each morning of the counsel. Here’s how it originated ...

I could feel Shauna silently performing the alchemical work of creating and holding the space open as the conference began. After helping us feel at ease in this unusual gathering, with many jokes and asides, and fielding a few logistical questions, she moved to the front of the small stage, dropped her voice into an intimate tone, and spoke of her last few years in litigation. A former female employee had sued her for sexual harassment. Although she eventually won the case, for two years Shauna was dragged through the courts and into the media.

Standing on the stage in front of a room full of strangers, she told us of her ordeal. Her face clouded, darkened, thickened with the memory. She put her hands in her pockets, told us how she went around for those years with her hands in her pockets lest she touch someone and they hate and shame her for it. “But now,” she said, her eyes beginning to tear, her voice to choke, “when I think of this gathering it is like this” — her arms reached to embrace us all — “with my arms out, wanting to touch, to connect ...” With this one story wrenched from her open, wounded heart, Shauna set the tone for the entire weekend.

Shauna then showed us a cape and crown she had brought for the occasion. She donned them and strutted across the stage. “Just in case you want to wear them,” she said, “when you are speaking to the group ... And oh, one other thing, whoever wants a standing ovation, at any time during the weekend, just ask for it!” Which is exactly what many



women did; we stood and clapped and cheered for one woman after another countless times during those four days. This simple instruction was amazingly effective. It gave us permission to continuously identify, tap into, and express the energy present in all these “old women” who, in any other context, might be completely invisible.

“And now,” Shauna said, “I turn the microphone over to you. Who wants to come up here and share your story with us?” Immediately, a hand shot up, and the first woman walked up to the microphone, donned the cape and crown, and began to speak. Suddenly on alert, spine erect and tingling, I was riveted.

She was followed by another, and another, all of them telling stories from their lives, one by one walking up proudly to speak, each in her own strong, individuated voice.

First Year’s Talent Show Atmosphere

After the initial hilarity, the quiet, introspective mood of one woman’s presentation served as transition to the finale of this evening’s “entertainment” — the enactment of the myth of Inanna by my friend Ella [who was being treated for cancer and has since died], whose bald head and skeletal presence had been an arresting feature throughout the counsel. Ella looks and acts simultaneously very young and very old. She is a female ET, whose shiny hairless skin stretches over bony structure to present the essence of spirit. Throughout the gathering, we could not help but look openly at her, trying not to stare ... and here she was, stepping regally onto the little stage, daring us to look openly at her body, inciting fear and fascination.

In the myth, Inanna, the Queen of Heaven in the old Goddess culture, descended into the underworld to meet her dark sister, Erishkigal. She died, was hung on a peg for three days, and was resurrected. On her way down Inanna passes through seven gates of initiation, gradually removing all that she valued, beginning with her crown and jewelry, on to (in Ella’s case) her curly blonde wig, her cape and gown, piece by piece, all being released, each time to the accompani-

[THE UNVEILING, continued on Page 11]

THE UNVEILING *[Continued from Page 10]*

ment of drum beats and low moans and groans from the audience.

Instantly, the tone of the evening shifted into a deep and anguished solemnity. Like the audience during an old Greek drama, we moved through terrible suffering to joyous catharsis. It was as if in the re-enactment of this pre-Christian resurrection myth, we were mourning for our sisters, our mothers, our friends and ourselves, who have undergone this radical disease, its terrible scarring.

Can you imagine this? Can you imagine the process we women had moved through in only 48 hours to accept and fully embrace this sacred, intimate drama? Can you visualize Ella's bald ethereal beauty, her courage in exposing her body to us, as she stalked slowly around the stage, nearly naked, her rubbery prosthetic breast held high in one hand for all to see? Ella became the lamb of our collective sacrifice, wearing only underpants and a scarf tied around her remaining breast, exposing her scar on the left side.

Inanna's death at the hands of her dark sister was our own. In witnessing Ella's own wrenching drama, we dropped our daily poses, and became one with our own death.

Then Ella slowly arose from the floor, assumed new garments, including a huge cone-shaped hat and a scepter. As she was resurrected, so were we, drying our tears and singing, "We all come from the Goddess."

Conclusion:

For three days we astonished each other with both the life inside us and the protean forms that life has taken. We are beautiful. We are powerful. And we are reaching for each



Ella Eagle portraying the agony of Inanna as Death strips her identity

other now, in recognition of what we have gone through, of what we have learned. Our lives, distilled into stories, are meaningful. They have made us wise. And, what was more surprising to me: our energy, distilled into essence, turned playful, erotic, divine! We were like babies, our sexuality pouring through our fingertips. This fusion, of wisdom and eroticism, is, I feel, the central insight into Crone, which I received from the Counsel.

I pray that humanity may become what we women created for those few precious days.

I see it this way: if crones can do it, we all can. Who have been more isolated from others than old women? Who have been more invisible? Who, in our western culture, for literally thousands of years, has had a worse reputation than the old Crone Herself? The patriarchal dictionary definition of Her, as the disgusting old hag, became, finally, accepted as Her truth. The energy of Her age-old wisdom was denied and turned inward. Unused, the energy stagnated, and grew bitter. As an archetype, the Crone was buried eons ago. During this long, lonely time, those few individuals who still carried the Crone energy felt buried alive; so resigned were they to their own isolation that they thought they preferred it.

There was no bitterness at the Crones Counsel. Quite the opposite. We had gathered together in freedom — to understand each other, and to lift the veil of millennia of oppression. The intensity and range of our feelings were extraordinary, and the dominant note was joy — as sheer hilarious exuberance, as deeply spiritual eroticism, as a common wisdom distilled from the fusion of thoroughly examined lives.

And we will do it again. We will gather and gather until the Crone is embraced in the bosom of humanity.

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FRIEND, PIONEER IN DYING WITH DIGNITY

JULIEN PUZEY 1945-2008

by *Connie Dawson*

Once in a while, someone crosses my path and I just know I should pay good attention to what she is teaching me. So it was with Julien Puzey. Julien seemed to live her life from her Highest Self. She spoke her truth, even though it sometimes took some heavy thinking to get the full meaning of what she said.

I first met Julien at a Counsel. I asked for a copy of a particularly powerful poem she had read. From then on, we began a series of intermittent conversations, which I treasured.

Julien had a way of perceiving things that went beyond how even the most thoughtful and enlightened among us perceive them. She spoke her truth, a truth based on principles derived from the world of Nature. Julien often questioned commonly held assumptions and did so with respect and compassion. She commented on the foibles and majesty of the human condition with good humor, never ridicule. She was, all in all, the embodiment of the unexpected.

For instance, she and others at the Cancer Wellness Center in Salt Lake made a large foldable canvas labyrinth; the one many of us cronies walked at the first Boise gathering. Julien told me of the time they spread out the labyrinth on the marble floor in the rotunda of the Utah Capitol. Candles and barely audible chanting filled the space with gentleness.

Julien and her compatriots sat meditatively with soft smiles of acknowledgment as passersby stopped, wondered, actually asked about the labyrinth, or passed by pre-



tending not to notice. After many hours, they quietly folded the labyrinth and left. I love that.

That I remember so many things she said to me is perhaps the measure of how much Julien impacted my life. And at the end of this life, she died as she wished, with humble nobility. She left behind much for me to remember.

MAKING SPACE

by *Mahtowin*

In a room of over 200, attending an annual gathering of Cronos Counsel, I spotted a woman I did not know, but recognized as a familiar. Visible was an impish gleam in her eyes that seemed to challenge the listener to divine the unspoken joke that she was offering. There appeared to be some hidden delight in her tucked-in grin. Not quite a full smile — she saved that for later — but lips drawn outward with a slight curl at the ends. When she saw that you got the hidden message her smile filled her entire face. Eyes sparkled, cheeks lifted and lips pulled up into a stunning explosion of pure delight.

Oh, how I wanted to know this woman. I moved closer and listened as she spoke with other women. Her use of language was exquisite, and I wondered what I could possibly say to engage her in a dialogue. I was intimidated by her intellectual brilliance and walked away. I watched her for the next three days and finally worked up the courage to introduce myself on the last day of the gathering.

The next year I was asked to join the board of Cronos Counsel and saw this as an opportunity to know Julien on another level. I often sat in awe as she displayed the workings of her mind. It was an incredible thing to behold.

I consider myself blessed to have known Julien. She left me with many fond memories.

Julien was an exceptional woman who lived life with courage, humor, wisdom, and a knowing of her true self. I am grateful in the knowing of her and her presence in my life. I feel the void that she has left with her passing and at the same time hear her saying, "I've just made space for someone else to fill."

Goodbye friend.

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