



CroneTimes

WWW.CRONESCOUNSEL.ORG

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CRONES COUNSEL XV - ASILOMAR, CA

Celebrating Wise Women



FOUND A MISSING PART

Asilomar Crones Conference was amazing. I found a missing part of my life: older women role models. I am young by Crone standards, 64. I established friendships, relationships with wise, talented, educated women that I admire and wish to emulate.

I was amazed by the variety of women — ages, backgrounds, and varying levels of tolerance for me, a relative newcomer. Instant acceptance by many, wisdom imparted in our small circle, lasting friendship and support.

While leading daily Laughter Yoga sessions, I was washed with love, acceptance, support, and joy. This was especially evident on the morning I stumbled in, tired, hung over due to drinking and playing a board game with the Utah Crones until 2:00 AM.

The support continues. Crones have invited me to travel to Santa Cruz to share more Laughter Yoga and they have been interested in my humanitarian work in Cambodia. I have traveled with Esta, stayed over at Singing Nancy's, and read Marsha Scarbrough's book. I am enjoying wearing Vita's amber, using a drum made by Marta, listening to Sophia's CDs, and sharing Ginger's gratitude cards. The experience of Asilomar Crones week made my life even richer.

—Dianne Theil McNinch

THE HUNDRED HUGS AND KISSES

The high from Wise Women Counsel is still with me. The El-



der Ceremony was overwhelming, wonderful, and deeply moving. I can close my eyes and remember the hundred hugs and kisses. The beautiful beaded scarf gift from the ceremony is my favorite accessory.

Today I am a different person. I celebrate aging. I have energy for creative projects. Most importantly, I feel valuable, useful, grounded, and whole. Since our Counsel meeting my life has expanded into new exciting areas. Thank you.

—Pat Palmer

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CRONE CONDUITS

There we were at Asilomar in September — all of us caught up in the moment as we leaned forward to hear the morning storytelling. By now, the second day of Counsel, we had become the conduits through which the Crone flowed. We were among the 150 ecstatic women crying, singing, laughing at the drop of a hat, and wearing our hearts on our sleeves. We were centered now in this place, infused with the special energy and love generated between us, greeting everyone we met with joy and openness.

Glorifying in being women was just a part of it. The support and permission we gently gave one another to be fully who we are was the wonder of it all. We were all aware of the magic and privilege of being part of the first such experience for many women. To be a woman is to be strong, kind, fearless, knowing how easily our hearts can be broken, yet knowing also that in mid-life we have prevailed, that our elders have much to teach us, that we have a duty to honor them, and we will protect, teach, and listen to the children.

I honor all that we learned by being together, as well as the lessons we brought to one another. As the heartbeat of the drum called on the life-force within us, we became forever one. As long as those hearts are beating, we cannot be stopped.

— *Mnimaka*

Betsy Rose was terrific. I loved seeing all those women singing together. You could tell they were really into it. The Honoring of the Elders was quite touching — for those being honored — and for those that honored them. What a lovely idea to have a gorgeous scarf to wear afterwards — in case you couldn't believe it had really happened to you! How nice to have little “shops” so you could take home a souvenir of your time with all your new friends or a gift of learning for yourself.



I still have a warm feeling from all those beautiful women so accepting of themselves and of each other.

— *Mary Egan*



“WE WILL NEVER FORGET YOU”

It's one thing to accept the inevitability of our own mortality, but quite another to cope with our perfectly human fear of being forgotten. How touching then to be able to add my voice to an audience of other aging, glowing women singing “We will never forget you,” to the newly crowned elders. I imagined myself on the stage some twenty years hence. Receiving this sung reassurance would be comforting, affirming, and nourishing. These words from other women, some young enough to be my daughters, would give me a measure of pride and peace at reaching Cronehood. So, for me, a new member of the Crones Counsel

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A WARM FEELING

This was my first Crones Counsel and I loved everything! I loved Asilomar although I was so busy attending all the wonderful workshops that I hardly got to the beach. It was wonderful to see all the women who never get a chance to drum, drumming to their heart's content — and dancing! OH THAT WAS FUN!

CELEBRATING WISE WOMEN *[Continued from Page 2]*

this year, singing this blessing to others was the most tender, meaningful moment of the conference.

I had already given a vocal workshop, “Raising Our Voices; Singing Our Hearts Out.” Each participant had discovered her melody. Leaping with faith into the space between anxiety and hope she had received her song from the celestial choir, shared it with others and reveled in the magic of this process. I had also performed two songs for the collected assembly of Crones who had appreciated the depth of the words like no other audience of seekers since they’d been penned.



Since the conference, I have had a Crone visitor, another presenter, as a guest in my home, received unsolicited photos of the conference in the mail from an attendee I can't remember, am planning a long trip to another Crone, and have helped form a new Crone group where I live.

Thank you so much Crones Counsel!

— *Nancy Shneiderman*

A SUMPTUOUS FEAST

Celebrating Wise Women at Asilomar was a sumptuous feast of sisterhood. I felt embraced by the wild energies of trees, sky, and sea, and I enjoyed the shelter of Julia Morgan's warm earthy architecture. Meals were nourishing and delicious. The weather was sublime. But the most precious gift of those beautiful days was the company of wise wild women who poured in from every corner of our land. We laughed and cried, danced and sang, talked and listened ... and appreciated wizened beauty in a won-



drous array of feminine expression. I especially enjoyed Dianne McNinch's Laughter Yoga, the sensuous meditation of Catherine Sutton's women's dances, Nancy Shneiderman's rousing anthems, Enid Williams' jokes and sly political satire. The Follies were a blast. Betsy Rose's concert was an inspiration. The women who shared their stories opened my heart.

— *Marsha Scarbrough*



AND MAMA OCEAN ROCKED US ALL

Crone Counsels, to me, are about opening my heart and opening my arms. Crone Counsel XV added a third dimension ... Mama Ocean opened Her arms and rocked me to sleep each night. Open arms, open hearts, openings in wisdom and learning to enlarge both heart and arms; that is Crone Counsel. And ... laughter, lots and lots of hugs and laughter! Sharon even made the announcements a laughing event.

Asilomar is such a female setting. It enhances everything which happens on those amazing grounds. I was absolutely enchanted by Dianne, the giggling guru, who opened every morning with Laughter Yoga; Eleanor, with her beads and peace wheel, who helped us string much more than beads; Betsy Rose, who led us in “Singing for the Mothers all over the Earth”; Win, who led us through the decades of our lives with such tenderness; Jackie and Betty segued our talent show with grace; and, I salute every talented workshop presenter, every amazing artist and writer, and every wise crone who, simply by her presence, made the world a better place to be. Our crone Elders were a bouquet of beauty on the stage and in our wisdom circles. What a lucky crone I was to be there!

— *Alexa Abo West* (11 Crone Counsels and counting)

President's Message

by Nancy Lehto

Fall is my favorite time of the year. It is the time of the Crone and our Crones Counsel gathering. I just returned from the fifteenth annual Crones Counsel – and what a wonderful gathering it was. I am always so inspired by the women I meet. I can't imagine autumn without a gathering of Crones.

We've made a change this year regarding Crones Counsel membership. We've decided to do away with the actual membership process. According to the articles of incorporation, everyone attending a Crones Counsel gathering, in essence, is a member of Crones Counsel, Inc., for that year, until the next gathering, regardless of the actual date. We haven't raised the

Who Are We?

CRONES 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.
Publisher—Crones Counsel Inc., *Editor/Designer*—Marta Quest, *Reporter*—Kianna Bader, *Contributors*—Berta Parrish, Lynn Emerson-Walsh, Julien Puzey, Enid Williams, Susan Ann Stauffer

Honor/Remember Someone You Care About

AND SUPPORT CRONES COUNSEL AT THE SAME TIME

Show someone that you care and make a donation to
CRONES COUNSEL:

- ★ *In Honor of someone,* ★ *In Memory of someone,*
- ★ *In Celebration of someone's birthday, anniversary, retirement, special achievement, etc.*

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.*

registration rates for many years and due to the rising costs of conference venues and fees, and the administrative costs of Crones Counsel, we have had to raise the registration rate. The new rates are actually less than the combined membership and registration of the past. And this change in policy will bring *CroneTimes* to more women – everyone who attended the gathering.

I am looking forward to our next gathering, hosted by the Seattle Crones, in 2008. We have proposals for gatherings in 2009 and 2010, and are looking for additional Crone circles or groups of women to host future gatherings. If you have even a small circle of women who are interested in hosting a national Crones Counsel gathering, please let us know. There is plenty of assistance from the board and others. Our gatherings rely on women dedicated to keeping our commitment of national gatherings a reality. We have had two gatherings in San Diego, four at Asilomar in Northern California, two in Colorado, one in Utah, two in Idaho, one in Nevada, one in Arizona, one in Wyoming, and one in Washington, with one more next year. Traditionally, our gatherings have been held in the west, but there is no "rule" to do so. We had a wonderful, small and intimate gathering in Tennessee. We look forward to gatherings all over the country, welcoming Crones everywhere.

The board is always on the lookout for women interested in supporting Crones Counsel by becoming board members. Let me know if you are interested, and I will email you an *Intent to Serve* form. Particular skills that are always needed include treasurer, secretary, web skills, and conference planning. Of course, enthusiasm and commitment are desired qualities because they are the keys to a smooth working board.

Please let any of us on the board know how we can help to make each and every Crones Counsel gathering memorable, and how we can support you throughout the year.

Crones Counsel, Inc., Board of Directors:

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NEWS FLASH!!

A GATHERING OF WISE WOMEN PLANNED FOR THE



Great Pacific Northwest

THIS JUST IN! RELIABLE SOURCES TELL US THE CRONES OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST HAVE ISSUED A WARM INVITATION FOR ALL WOMEN TO JOIN IN THE FUN PLANNED FOR CRONES COUNSEL 2008 TO BE HELD IN MAGNIFICENT SEATTLE.

CELEBRATE THE CRONE SEPTEMBER 17 -21 2008

*The shockingly dynamic wild and wise women of the Pacific Northwest invite you to Seattle to celebrate our crone natures at our 2008 gathering. We will listen to others stories, tell our own, laugh, sing, drum and dance amidst the wisdom energy of the North and the thoughtful energy of the West.
BE THERE!!*



There will be an optional half day bus trip to the downtown waterfront at no cost, or just relax in the surrounding scenery of the Northwest. We hope to see all crones gather together in Seattle 2008 for a spiritual uplifting time for all.

REGISTER TODAY !

Reserve a spot at the gathering by obtaining information or registering online at,

www.cronescounsel.org

HOTEL RESERVATIONS CAN BE MADE DIRECTLY THROUGH THE DOUBLETREE GUEST SUITES AT CENTRAL RESERVATIONS 800-222-8733, OR, THROUGH THE HOTEL AT 206-575-8220. ROOMS ARE GOOD SIZED, HAVE MICROWAVES, REFRIGERATORS, AND INCLUDE A SITTING AREA. CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST WILL BE INCLUDED EACH MORNING AT NO EXTRA COST. THE GROUP RATE IS AVAILABLE 3 DAYS BEFORE AND 3 DAYS FOLLOWING THE EVENT.

We cannot guarantee room availability after August 20th and the group rate of \$139.00 for one or two people with an extra \$10.00 charge for the third and fourth person will not be available after August 26th. There will be free shuttle service from the airport as needed



Crones Counsel

CRONES COUNSEL XVI – Northwest Passages

September 17-21, 2008 • Seattle, Washington

In September of 2008 Crones Counsel XVI will gather in Seattle, Washington. Come enjoy cityscapes and verdant valleys set between Puget Sound and the snow-capped Cascade Mountains of our beautiful Northwest country. We offer a warm welcome!

As you experience your passage to the Northwest, think on these things. Storytelling is at the heart of our gatherings and this year we may find our focus in the idea of passages. Passages from one place to another, passages through change, through narrow spaces when we could not see the light at the other end, rough passages and smooth. We have learned to ride the winds and waves (and according to legend, maybe even a whale) and we have come through.

Come explore Northwest Passages. Share the stories of your own passages through the winds and waves of time, space and circumstance. We will listen. We will laugh and cry. We will sing and dance together.

HOTEL INFORMATION

Doubletree Guest Suites Seattle Airport/Southcenter,
16500 Southcenter Parkway, Seattle, Washington 98188

Complimentary shuttle to and from Sea/Tac Airport

CRONES COUNSEL Marketplace

T-SHIRTS: Silkscreened with our beautiful logo printed on a silver gray shirt. Available in all sizes. Cost is \$18.00 and includes shipping.

CALENDARS: Once again CRONES COUNSEL has created a calendar that contains many pictures from the gathering in Asilomar, California. These 2008 calendars include phases of the moon and important dates, including birthdays of Crones. The calendars are beautiful and are a monthly reminder of fun times had with wonderful wise women. They also make wonderful gifts for your Crone sisters. The cost is \$20 and includes shipping. *IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO GET YOURS.*

Send your order and payment to CRONES COUNSEL Inc.,
P.O. Box 485, Ekalaka, MT 59324.



ROOM RATES

Single/\$139 Double/\$139 Triple/\$149 Quad/\$159

NOTE: Room Rates and Availability cannot be guaranteed beyond August 20, 2008.

RESERVATIONS

Reservations may be made by calling the central reservation system: (800) 222-TREE (8733) or call the hotel directly: (206) 575-8220. *Credit Cards Accepted / ADA Approved.*

Continental Breakfast provided. All other meals, except for the banquet, are on your own.

Be sure to identify your event/group/special needs when making your reservation.

ARRIVAL: Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2008

Registration: 4:00-6:00 PM Opening Session: 7:00 PM

DEPARTURE: Sunday, Sept. 21, 2008

Closing Session: 8:30 AM Checkout: 12:00 noon

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

Let's Be about It

by Susan Ann Stauffer, PhD

Perhaps living into old age is the greatest creative task of our lives. And now, our thirty-year life bonus, our extended longevity, has given us an incredible opportunity to age in ways unknown and unimaginable in times past. Women are the fastest growing segment of the older population. Our sheer numbers make aging largely a woman's domain. Moreover, as aging women today, we have the means, the power, and the wisdom to ripen, to engage with life visibly and vocally, indeed, we have the ability to take up space. We know that we need not accept the culture's denigration of older women. Rather, we are about awakening the intuitive centers of our brains, rewiring and re-routing the circuitry. Most assuredly, *magic is afoot*. We have awakened both to the fact of our past invisibility and our possible future contribution.

We have developed new maps, new strategies, for aging. The old maps were non-existent (for women), truncated, or inadequate. Given the present-day age wave, it is inevitable that aging issues will take front and center stage. More attention will be brought to where we, as women, are situated in an aging society. We already know that the time is ripe to enliven all of the symbols by which we have been unconsciously motivated and begin to inhere and integrate and merge them with other ascending powers for the greater good of all women. We know that the crone archetype superbly fulfills this need; we know it exerts a powerful pull on the psyche. The tug of the crone consciousness calls for integrations of the twists and turns, ascents and descents, and all the adventures and detours of life. Such integration of dualities presages wholeness, completeness, and lends purpose to longevity.

In my mind, there is not a tiny shadow of a doubt that the usage of the word "crone" will become common parlance. We need not worry. We need not fear the word. We need not soften it or change it. It will not be a term of offense. We must hold our ground. With intrepid integrity we must with certainty comprehend that the term will be understood in its truest meaning as an archetypal referent designating a consciousness of wisdom. It will, assuredly, function as a positive ascription for older women; crone will not mean a wizened old hag much longer.

Rather, the archetypal referent of crone will continue to serve as a means of empowerment, as an orienting principle that co-

hesively extends women's consciousness in ways that will influence the course of history for the next 100 years. We know it is our task to hold the wisdom function for our culture. It is our response-ability to show our aging face. Aging is the last hurrah, it is fierce, and it requires everything we have to live it well. The archetype of "crone" represents this final jubilation — the fierceness, the terror, the loss, the joy, the triumph, the survivorship of old age, the character, and most importantly, the power of old age — without apology. Embracing the archetype of crone does serve a world where poverty, violence, war, and ecological disaster are ever-present accompaniments to daily life. We must realize that the crone consciousness that we bring into the world will set the standard for aging policy, it will challenge the extant knowledge of academia, it will influence the institutions we have erected around our older population, it will amend laws, and it will alter families. Who knows, it may even change the world.

Thirty-four years ago I began practicing and teaching yoga and meditation. It was my desire to take these disciplines into corporate America as a way to help with employee burn-out and stress. Back then, I would say the word "yoga" and people would look at me with something resembling terror — like I was speaking and promoting some dire evil. If I spoke about "meditation" I was regarded as a lunatic, some drug-crazed hippie chick. Well, look where we are today. These two words are common parlance. Their true meaning is understood; the power and practice of yoga and meditation are espoused daily by doctors, teachers, coaches, CEOs, and our next-door neighbors as means to well-being and enlightenment. What changed? Time passed. People looked and listened, they tasted and liked how they felt and what they learned. They grew stronger and healthier.

It will be the same with the word crone. When the word "crone" is unwrapped from its overlay of negativity, exonerated from proof of historicity, released as an insulting label or designated social rank, it exerts an extremely powerful, potent, and commanding process of growth in our psyche. It is expansive and life-enhancing. It has a powerful whiff of spirituality to it. Yes, we are bold and audacious to use the word, to call ourselves crones, to call ourselves wise old women. But ours is a feminist spirituality of possibility, of vision, of transformation. We are living in a transitional time, in the parenthesis of time, in jump time, between-story time. In order to navigate through this period of extreme transition, we know transformation is required. So ... Own the word. Leap and the net will appear.

Let's be about it.

SUSAN ANN has attended every Crones Counsel gathering. Everything she writes is dedicated to the evocative spirit of Shauna Adix, founder of Crones Counsel, and to her wise mentor and teacher, Dr. Ramona Adams, co-founder of Crones Counsel, who also has not missed a Crones Counsel gathering.



DO YOU HAVE PHOTOS TO SHARE WITH OUR HISTORIAN?

Our Historian, Susan Ann Stauffer, is working on scrapbooks for each year of Crones Counsel. Do you have any pictures, old or new, from any of the gatherings that you would be willing to share for these scrapbooks? Any other memorabilia would be greatly appreciated.

Please contact Susan Ann Stauffer, 95-1202 Wikao Street, Milihani, HI 96789 or by e-mail: sastauffer@hawaii.rr.com

“Old Age Isn’t for Sissies”

by Enid Williams

Imagine, we have managed to SURVIVE and THRIVE this long! We are now, however, ruefully experiencing some of the “kranks,” the difficulties that we noticed in Elders when we were young and vibrant. (In our earlier days, we really didn’t think we’d ever get this close to the “Last RoundUp,” did we?)

I wonder if you were as unnerved as I was to read Meg Randle’s concise, comprehensive list of the Normal Changes of Aging at the Asilomar Crones’ Counsel Workshop? Some we can dismiss with a wry, “Been There, Done That.” Enid, for one, just doesn’t want to contemplate some of those Normal Changes. She is too *busy* trying to cope with insistent Abnormal Changes: they take an inordinate amount of time, energy, and resources; and I could happily do without them!

My thoughts return to T.S. Eliot’s lines, “Why should I mourn the vanished power of the usual reign?” Well, we DO! It is hard to remember when we were lithe of step, when we could summon our powers of thought, of action, at will. There are times when we are baffled, saddened, even humiliated, by our gradual loss of such essential strengths.

Our progress down the tangled path of Aging has been like shifting sands under our feet: fairly imperceptible; measured. We may well wonder, How did I get HERE? We need to just adjust and accept what Time has brought us. We are, after all, Children of the Universe, and we are following well-trodden Paths of all that lives.

Was it the irrepressible Bette Davis who said, “Old age isn’t for sissies”? — because, from our Crone perspective, truer words were never spoken.

In my too-distant early thirties, I worked in New York City as a private-duty nurse with geriatric patients. As some of my patients faced medical/surgical ordeals that would daunt a younger person, I marveled at the courage, the strengths they somehow summoned. It didn’t really enter my consciousness that some day I would be there, too, gratefully accepting some deferential treatment, but also putting up with a lot of indignities foisted on me by my own body, and also by the outer world.

I creak a bit on arising, and I doggedly pursue the many routines which enable this bemused 84 year old to function. I try to “go with the flow.” I endeavor to listen to my aged body’s needs, and to be kind to m’self, not making demands that I cannot possibly meet!

I have increased sensitivity to the Sacred Oneness of our world. I feel enveloped by the loving kindness of friends, and of some random strangers. I feel serene and contented, petting my purring furry wonder, MagNIFFYcat; I rejoice in the living green-ness of my plants, and I glory in the majestic mountains nearby. I see each day as a gift, and I savor the Blessing that is Life — at any age!

November 2 was a sacred and special time for us to connect with the Spirit World. The First Mother and our maternal ancestors have been on my mind as I try to follow Woman’s Path.

What can a Crone do, in the remaining days, months, perhaps years, that remain for her?

My earth-based friend, Vicky, a nurse who has worked on Native American reservations, blessedly sent me an answer. “The honor of the people lies in the moccasin tracks of the woman. Walk the good road ... Be dutiful, respectful, gentle, and modest ... Be strong with the warm, strong heart of the Earth. No people goes down until their women are weak and dishonored, or dead upon the ground. Be strong and sing the strength of the Great Powers within you, all around you.”



The duty, the pleasure, I perceive and cherish is to foster and protect our Mother Earth, to love Humanity, to do what good, what kindnesses I can, within the limitations of my abilities as a Wise Woman Crone.

Without You

Without you, there would be no Crones Counsel. Every year many wonderful women come to our gathering. What began at Jackson Hole, Wyoming, fifteen years ago continues to grow and flourish. Over the years, we have come to expect certain things — such as Storytelling, Honoring the Elders, Crone Circles, Workshops, *CroneTimes*. We’ve met in many places and yet the magic is always there.

Behind the scenes there is a hard-working group of women who try to keep things running smoothly. At present there are 11 Board members, but this number is constantly changing. There is always a need for new faces and new talents. Please consider requesting an Application to Serve on the Board and we will keep you in our files. Let us know your expertise so that you can help keep the magic glowing.

Contact: Kianna, 9425 Montevideo Dr., Wilton, CA 95693 or kianna4064@gmail.com.



read ..**ELDERWOMAN - the book**
by Marian Van Eyk McCain

visit ...**ELDERWOMAN - the website**
 www.elderwoman.org



and meet your sister crones online at
ELDERWOMANSPACE - the network

www.elderwoman.org/cronesnet.html

Crones Counsel 2008

by Lynn Emerson-Walsh

In 2006, an energetic and enthusiastic group of Washington State Crones gathered in Boulder to explore the possibility of bringing Crones Counsel 2008 to the northwest. In 2007, Crones at Asilomar cheered us on as the Washington Crones sang, Croné Croné, "Inviting all the Crones around to come up to Puget Sound!" We've never looked back and the energy is building as we move toward the New Year.

We are thrilled to be able to tell you that Simone LaDrumma will join us in Seattle! She has been composing and performing on hand drums since 1987. In 1991, she began teaching drumming "for a loving" with the creation of Drumming and The Holistic Expression of Rhythm, a method of learning to play hand drums that bridges the gap between our ancient tribal heritage and modern life. Since that time she has brought the magic of rhythmic expression to thousands of people across the U.S., Canada, and Europe, both as a teacher and as a performer. Her studio in Seattle offers classes to people of all levels and genders. For a number of years Simone has shared her talents and wonderful drumming with us at Crones Counsels and we are blessed this year to have Simone attend Crones Counsel 2008.



GAY BARKER "strumming up" interest for Crones Counsel XVI — Seattle

Betsy Rose enchanted and inspired us in Asilomar with her singing, guitar playing, and open-hearted sharing.

Betsy welcomes her audiences to a circle of healing, power, and song that is the hallmark of her community artistry. She is a rich musical storyteller, seasoned artist, gifted writer, and longtime voice for peace and social justice. Infused with wisdom, compassion, and honesty, hers is timeless music for times of change — soul food on our journey in the twenty-first century. Betsy breathes passion and purity into her songs, lifts our hearts and imaginations, and inspires us to dream a larger Self. We are blessed once again that Betsy can be with us in Seattle.

On Saturday, a free afternoon is planned. An optional, complimentary bus tour is offered to enjoy the sights of Seattle. One bus will go to the Seattle Center with the Space Needle, Science Center, and Experimental Music Project. The other bus will go to Pike Place Market where local farmers and craftspeople sell their wares.

Please register as soon as possible for Crones Counsel 2008, and when you register with the hotel, please be sure to mention Crones Counsel.

We are so looking forward to seeing all of you in Seattle September 17-21, 2008, for another sacred Crone adventure!

CRONES COUNSEL MEMBERSHIP

In the Spring of 2007, the Crones Counsel board voted to raise the rates for the annual gathering by \$25 and do away with the membership program. This rate increase is \$10 less than the membership fee. This will begin with the 2008 gathering.

When Shauna Adix and her friends began what has become Crones Counsel, Inc., their dream was simply to provide a venue where older women could come together to celebrate the gift of age — the wisdom of the Crone. Over the last 15 years this dream has evolved until Crones Counsel is now a non-profit organization with a professional newsletter, a website, and many more administrative costs than in the beginning.

Needs change over time. And costs to provide the gathering increase. We haven't had an increase in registration fees in a very long time. According to the non-profit status paperwork, all who register for a gathering are essentially members of Crones Counsel and so will receive *CroneTimes* and any other member communications.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR CRONES COUNSEL GATHERINGS

A limited amount of scholarships are available for each gathering. Elders are given priority, then first timers. In order to give scholarships to more women, please do not ask for one more than twice in a row. To request a scholarship application, please contact Meera Messmer, registrar at gmessy2@aol.com or 520/760-3905.

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Entering Crone Time at the 2007 Cronos Counsel

by *Berta Parrish*



When I tell my friends about the fifteenth annual Cronos Counsel gathering, they ask what planet was I on. What happened is indeed very foreign to most modern American experiences.

I describe an evening ceremony where everyone over eighty years old is on the stage being acknowledged for the simple act of growing old. Each woman is crowned and given a beautiful, hand-made, intricately beaded scarf. After a mythic scenario, the entire audience of 150 women files past them, one by one. By the time I shake hands, hug, and compliment each of the octogenarians plus, I am sobbing – and I don't even know any of them personally! This "Honoring the Elders" event sets the tone for the next three days. They are given the best seats, are first in line for meals and the Give Away table, and are generally revered and cared for by complete strangers.

Another otherworldly feature is the daily Storytelling Hour. Women from all over the country, from Massachusetts to Hawaii, get up on the stage to share their stories. Moving stories of confession asking for forgiveness. Sad stories of abuse needing healing. Compelling stories of loss and recovery. Inspirational stories of facing fear. All powerful and liberating stories of the suffering, courage, and joys of being a woman. If the speaker wants a standing ovation (probably the first in her life), all she has to do is ask and the audience explodes with clapping and cheering. What a joyous noise we women make!

These two traditions plus so many others, such as interesting afternoon workshops, supporting Crone Circles, the touching Empty Chair to honor deceased friends, the hilarious Crone Follies, and lots of singing and drumming, comprise the annual Cronos Counsel gatherings, which started in 1993.

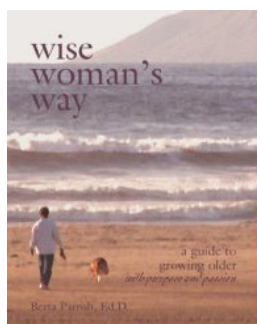
The gatherings further the organization's mission: to promote equality, encourage diversity, support personal empowerment, and honor the value to society of older women's wisdom and accomplishments. The term *Crone* was deliberately chosen, in spite of its negative connotations, to confront the stereotypes and challenges facing aging women. The name "Cronos Counsel" was chosen over "Cronos Council" to reflect the intention of creating a place where older women could share their histories and counsel with each other.

I left the gathering feeling quite young at sixty-one, eagerly anticipating the opportunities ahead, and appreciating the awesome wisdom of older women. By assuming the mantle of Crone and celebrating long life, these women are reclaiming the archetype of the Wise Old Woman and restoring her rightful place of honor and respect. My friends are right. I wasn't on planet Earth as we know it. I was transported to Mother Earth and nourished by her timeless, unconditional love.



The gatherings further the organization's mission: to promote equality, encourage diversity, support personal empowerment, and honor the value to society of older women's wisdom and accomplishments.

Embody the Crone's Archetypal Energies



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by **Berta** Parrish, Ed.D.

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Watching for Patterns at the Borders

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a letter Julien Puzey has shared with Cronet that speaks of her conscious decision to allow death to manifest in her life. Julien is much loved by many who have known her and she was present for at least the first ten years of Cronet Counsel, including being on the Board.



December 2007

My dear friends,

*I have arrived, I am home
In the here, In the now
I am solid, I am free
In the ultimate I dwell.*

—Thich Nhat Hanh

Frost Ferns and Borders

When I was a child winter was marked, in part, by the ice crystals on my window that looked like a forest of jeweled ferns—they were exquisitely beautiful. The appearance of the frost ferns, their brief dance in the pink glow of the morning and their melting as the sun rose was like receiving a post card from mystery itself. The frost ferns were a way of marking a border between worlds—inside and out, warm and cold, winter and spring.

I guess, in a way, you could say that I have spent much of my life watching for patterns at the borders. With time and circumstance and ensconced in ego the patterns at the boundaries have sometimes been opaque—difficult to discern. But I am finding, as I move more deeply into this last phase of my human being, that I am becoming more permeable and that the patterns dance more frequently.

Eye of the Storm

My oncologist received the reports back from the laboratory at the end of November- they portend a difficult border, a threshold and a pattern of moving from living well with metastasis to living a time of living my dying with as much consciousness and dignity as grace and mystery will grant.

I am writing to you from the eye of the storm – a place of both perspective and of safety. And I can feel the storms gathering in my very bones. There are darkening clouds ripe with the change and the promise of transcendence. I know I will never feel prepared, I acknowledge the dread and the terror. I also have great curiosity about the wondrous patterns that are coming with the chaos.

Everything arrives with its opposite—everything!

Blue Spruce Place

In the autumn of 2006 Marie and I, settled into our new home—Blue Spruce Place. We love our home, the hardwood floors, and the birds that animate both front and back yards.

There are quail that just today (December 1), brought a smile as they tunneled through the deep snow toward the seeds that the house wrens had scattered from the feeder. There is peace in our new home and a deep comforting quiet, but it is the light that is particularly healing — wonderful, natural light in every room that changes with the day.

This October Marie and I planted 500 bulbs. Rather, I should say I dug 50 holes and put ten bulbs in each hole — it was Marie who came along, kneeling in kneepads, to turn each bulb to orient it to align with the light. I think she is helping me do that also — gently helping to turn me, being with me so that when acceptance becomes surrender my quickening into greater life will be glorious — another blossoming.

Divesting and Dismantling of the Ego Identity Project

Of course, the process of moving from our first house, where we had lived for over twenty years, was monumental just in terms of stuff! The process was one of shedding out-grown personal identity projects along with their cumbersome and life-insulating accessories. I (actually we, because life review is apparently a contagious process) continue to unburden from the nonessential and grieve the separation from the still precious.

Painful, this dismantling of the familiar ego identity — I watch as I struggle and bargain and deny and tentatively accept that this incarnation is quickly coming an end, only to find myself moving into another cycle of the same.

There is a lot about being me that I have liked. In fact, I once told a therapist that I had worked very hard to create an imaginary self that would not bore me and that I had very high standards. I wish I knew where that therapist was now so that I could tell her that letting go of “special ness” and a need to be an exception to the rules is a great relief.

Recurrence

The ovarian cancer that I had danced with, almost nine years ago, reasserted itself early this year (2007). In March I had a feeling that my very being was being pulled into a thick limbo. It was not like a dark night of the soul, it was more like a plug had been pulled and I lost all of my chi. I could barely generate interest in the world. I lost my appetite for both ideas and food. I had night sweats and abdominal pain — sometimes vague sometimes severe. In May I was admitted to intensive care and treated for apparent pneumonia. It was there, in the hospital, where a lab test (CA 125) indicated that the cancer had aggressively recurred.

Huntsman Cancer Hospital — Compassion

In early July, I was admitted to Huntsman Cancer Hospital for cancer de-bulking surgery. It was a ten-day hospital stay — plugged into the wall. The surgery was a controlled trauma of major proportions. The details of the surgery and the pathology

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WATCHING FOR PATTERNS *[Continued from Page 11]*

report were grim. The chances of reversing the trajectory of the disease are slim even with the most aggressive of treatment.

But what I want you to know is that with all of the grimness about disease and medical procedures, the real story for me of 2007 was not about illness and hospitals but rather about compassion, love and hope.

Choosing Personal Congruence over Social Compliance

I agonized over whether or not to have aggressive chemotherapy for weeks. Treatment was the choice that everyone seemed to make. Treatment was a part of the valiant battles with cancer. It is just what one does. (I know I have done it, but that was then and this is now). The closer I came to the day when my treatments were scheduled to begin the more it felt wrong for me. It felt dreadful like being handed a bar of herbal soap and then sent to the gas ovens. I just couldn't do it. Compliance felt like hopelessness. I choose door number three — not to have treatment.

I choose to front-load my contract, to enjoy the quality of life that I have left — to feel as well as I can so that I will have a greater capacity to participate in the great developmental transpersonal adventure of my own dying.

To my relief, my loved ones were also relieved by my choice.

Jonah on the Installment Plan

Perhaps what Jonah saw only appeared to be Leviathan.

What if it were actually a sea cloud —

A multitude of shimmering individual gifts

Coming not to engulf us but

To enfold us in radiance.

Witness — The Safety and Appropriateness of Death

For Christmas this year I am giving my loved ones and myself, the timely gift of my enrollment in hospice. Having failed to achieve Medicare (I will be 63 years old, February 8, 2008) CareSource Foundation will absorb the expense of my care. CareSource Hospice will provide the care itself. I know that I will be treated with compassion and expertise — that my pain will be managed and that I will be fully supported in living my dying as fully as possible — that I will be supported in receiving

and in giving the gifts that will arrive swaddled in chaos.

There are always tears now in the back of my throat — sort of like a roadside ditch that marks a border and encourages buttercups and watercress. I have found that it helps me with my own grief when my friends weep in my presence. Your tears are a gift to me. I would not want to be grieving alone.

My gratitude and my grief are immense. I do grieve the dismantling of my identity. There are many stubborn strands that seem intent on not unraveling.

Some friends and I have talked about an urn. One suggestion was that we have my favorite local potter make me something round and unglazed, but I have a casserole dish with a lid that fits nicely. The dish is deep green with a sprout-like design on the lid. It is squat and a comfortable shape and easy to carry and since it will be used as a take-out, of sorts, it will work beautifully to be carried somewhere deep into red-rock country to rest in the earth under the wide wild sky.

No doubt, in this final phase of my journey I will lose my way, resist, rage, and grieve in fear and confusion. When I do, please think of me gently or speak to me gently. Remind me that death is perfectly safe — that the way has been designed to bring me to my full humanness. Remind me that in nearing death I will find both reality and liberation.

May my own last need to “control” be gentle and bring some joy. Read poetry to me — I have marked pages here and there.

If in the end, I cannot be cared for at home, I have the hope of a room with a view — with French doors that look out onto a meadow. If I am lucky some horses will stand at the fence. If so, please bring apples for the horses, and make certain that the bird feeder has been filled at home.

Know that you are loved — that you are love

“Trees fall in the direction that they are leaning.” It is impossibly unlikely that I will be in human form at this time next year — but I will be around. You can look for me in the yellow of the goldfinch or listen for me in the breeze moving a wind chime. You may even find me in your own laughter.

Love to you, Julien

Julien Puzey and Marie Fulmer

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