



CroneTimes

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CRONES COUNSEL XIV – BOULDER, CO

Wise Woman Perspectives



When I come home from a Crones Counsel, my friends always ask me how it was. I say: wonderful, uplifting, fun, great connections with crone friends and with new crones, wild, deep, and so satisfying to be among such amazing women. They respond: it sounds great. This year, after telling my friends about the Boulder Counsel, five of them said they want to go next time. Maybe they're ready now. I like coming by myself because I like to travel on my own, and I don't mind being at Crones Counsel without local friends because who could miss anything while being embraced by such women? I was thinking, though, that it would be great fun to have a group from the Charlottesville area there. I'd like to see more women from the "east" get involved with Crones Counsel. I don't know if it was something about my description of the Boulder Counsel or my friends are realizing they are CRONES.

One of the things I love about Crones Counsel is the combination of the unique feel of each Counsel and the constants such as storytelling, the wisdom circles, the drumming, the workshops, and the knowledge that the women there are REAL — authentic, honest, funny, wild, loving, and creative. Boulder was no exception to any of this. The hotel was comfortable, the location was very convenient, and the views — what can one say coming from the mountains of Virginia, which, though lovely, look like small hills compared to the Rockies. The ceremonies were wonderful and I can still see the beautiful faces of the elders up on the screen. Thanks to the local crones and to the board for another memorable Crones Counsel. — SUE CHASE

An awesome array of beautiful women gathered in Boulder, Colorado, this year and that is what I will most remember, the women I met and talked with and loved. The great thing about this gathering was that it afforded every opportunity for us to get to know one another on a more personal basis. The highlight of this was, of course, the wisdom circle and I am deeply grateful for the wonderfully wise and loving women with whom I shared that time.

The laughter and tears we shared during storytelling opened our hearts, the meaningful and important exchange of views in Susan Ann Stauffer's workshop, and the many conversations that grew out of it opened our minds. From the opening moments to the spiral dance I found myself fully engaged. Several women from our northwest corner of Washington returned home buoyed with the enthusiasm and energy generated in Boulder and ready to try our hand at planning a gathering. The Colorado women provided one more marvelous model.

Oh yes, there was the matter of a lost drum and the Wiley Coyote I won in the last morning raffle. And thereby hangs a tale, which I may tell next year at Asilomar! — GAY BARKER

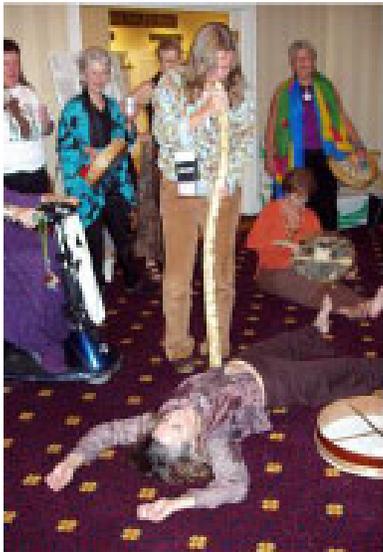
I had a smile on my face from the time I got there until I left, unless I had tears from a very touching story I heard.

I am so impressed with senior women that are so motivated with life and out in the world sharing their stories.

I learned a big lesson I hope never to forget. I would have never gotten up to tell about myself, but I was strongly encouraged. It was the best thing I could

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have done for myself. After that evening, women were coming up to me all the time and giving their love and support. Not only did I start to feel more a part of, I learned that if I get out of my fear and share, I get to meet a lot of wonderful people.

I am already looking forward to next year and hoping that other friends will also come. I am bringing my sister. If wanted I would enjoy giving

a workshop on blindness, for and with people.

I know I have written much more than one or two paragraphs, but I really could have gone on and on.

Thank you so much for wanting to hear from me.

— BEVERLEY HENINGER

Storytelling is ever a highlight of our gathering. For five minutes, a Crone Sister speaks from her heart. Some stories may be funny; some may be wrenchingly sad; all touch us in a very special way. Where else can we receive a Standing Ovation for revealing ourselves, for being disarmingly honest and open about our feelings? It is a wonderful kind of self-disclosure therapy, for sure ...

In a society that favors youth, a ceremony that honors those who have survived and thrived into the rarefied atmosphere of 80+ years, is a blessing and a revelation. This year's Crones Counsel celebration Honoring the Elders was especially meaningful for us. Our Elders sat at the front of the auditorium, crowned with colorful headdresses. We reveled in the video pictures, interviews, and statements of our Honored Elders. They have had such varied, interesting lives! We appreciated, venerated their struggles, their triumphs. These women helped to shed a kaleidoscopic kind of Lights on what we might expect, as we add years to our lives ...

— ENID WILLIAMS



This is my thirteenth Crones Counsel — each year it feels like such a meaningful “Homecoming,” embracing old friends, meeting new ones. I am glad that the basic structure of the conference stays the same: Storytelling in the morning, small workshops in the afternoon, Honoring the Elders, No-talent Show, and Wisdom Circles. It seems each year we deepen what is important, while the frills fall away. We are learning how to pare down, go straight to the core.



This year it felt to me that the Wisdom Circles were especially strong and meaningful. Meeting three times right after the Storytelling assembly gave us a container to deepen the energy and add our own feelings and personal stories. It was evident that women in all Wisdom Circles formed a strong bond and identity; some even formed concrete projects for the future and/or shared rituals with the whole group — i.e., pulling a scarf through the Circle's eight pairs of hands, symbolizing their prayers for healing, then wrapping the scarf on a Crone who will have to face chemo.

May the ripple effect of our wisdom, grace, and folly continue to spread and empower aging women. May we wear our crowns well.

— VITA LAUMÉ

Becoming an Elder at the Crones Counsel in 2006 allowed me to “cross off” one of five things I wanted to do before I die. I read several years ago that you should always have five on your list to complete before death, and as soon as you can cross one off, you just add another. The goal, of course, is to always have five possible goals, and be looking forward to something. Ever since I attended Crones Counsel in 2002, I have had that on my list of “wishes.” It is now crossed off, and been replaced.

The intensive interviews of each prospective Elder this year was most enjoyable. Now that I have returned home, and the



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President's Message

by Sharon Hoery

What a wonderful "Crones Journey" we had in Boulder! Colorado even did its best to greet all those journeying to her Mile High reputation. Deep blue skies, fall leaves of many colors, and warm temperatures allowed us to meet and eat outside. We sang, laughed, cried, drummed, learned, and played. **There is nothing like Crones Counsel!**

Crones Counsel was at a crossroads regarding future gatherings. Who would step up to be the new board members and leaders for tomorrow? Seven women (that's an auspicious number) stepped into the ring and said they would be willing to serve. Where 2008 would be held was also in question and two groups of women have begun looking at the possibility of hosting this gathering. This is SO exciting!

So many changes throughout the years have taken place as Crones Counsel has grown. Some of the tasks facing those serving on the Board have been becoming a non-profit 501(C)(3) corporation; venturing to the East at Kingsport, Tennessee; Outreach; a beautiful logo; pursuing a Trademark; membership; plus various other challenges (like the website).

I have served on Crones Counsel's board since the fall of 2001, and what is very clear to me today is that the one and only thing that makes a gathering become "magical" is **you**.

Yes, the Board serves as the "holder of the vessel" so that the gatherings can happen. What happens at the gatherings is the heart of Crones Counsel, Inc. We counsel each other. We affirm a sense of power, purpose, and productivity in our lives. As we explore issues of concern and receive information, we deepen our own personal truths.

Deepening our own personal truths is what brings me to the place I am standing in today. "Know thyself," and if I cannot stand in a place of integrity, I must make an assessment. I have been dealing with health issues this past year and then spent the month of November ill. Stress is a killer. Tissue tearing inside my left eye, leaving my vision in question, plus other illnesses expanded my perspective and views. If I do not love myself enough to take care of my health, I am not standing with integrity. So it is at this time I have resigned as the President and from the Board of Crones Counsel, Inc.

I thank every Board member I have served with since 2001. We were stretched and challenged many times over the years; however, the guiding principle has been to serve Crones Counsel. And I truly believe that Nancy Lehto, who had recently returned to the Board in the Vice President's position, will continue this principle. All things are in perfect order.

Stacia Ireland, I just so love this phrase from your poem, "Sisters of My Soul," for this is how I feel about Crones Counsel. The years have weaved so many individuals into my heart and there is such excitement when we again migrate to a gathering. The magic of Crones Counsel is you. Caw! Caw! See you by the sea!



Thank You for Your Life Mary

Dear "Sisters of My Soul",

With sadness and a heavy heart I am writing to say that my sis Mary (Young) died November 29 (three days shy of her 62nd birthday.)

Although her heart and immune system were strong, one of the melanoma tumors was right on her heart and basically shut down the right side of her heart. She had been quite symptom free through various surgeries and treatments over the last year and a half, until mid October when shortness of breath led her to the hospital. Her final stay was at a local hospital. She was in a private room, with loving docs and nurses and a lot of family around. I came out again about 10 days before she died and stayed through the memorial service. Mary's son and daughter, Michael and Nancy, were with her when she died. I had just left the hospital and was home at Mary's when Nancy called me back to the hospital — the 3 of us stayed for awhile and cried and then I was able to stay with Mary's body, undisturbed, for a couple of more hours. My commitment to her was that I would walk this journey with her until the end.

We had so many wonderful times together and our experiences at Crones were at the top of the list. This last Crones gathering in Boulder was extraordinary for both of us. The unconditional love that poured in when Mary asked for scarves and hats was an experience that will forever reside in our hearts. It was so clear to us both that what was happening was universal, beyond the two of us in form. As a friend of mine says, "love loving itself in form." Mary had been home a few days from the gathering when we talked on the phone. She did not say "I feel beautiful" nor "I know I am beautiful," she said "I AM BEAUTIFUL." She had fully received.

About a week before she died, we had this brief conversation: K: I love you, Mar; M: Love is always here; K: All there is is love; M: Yes, yes, and smiles.

I have with me always the precious shawl [Sbauna's] that was gifted (temporarily) to me. Although I go in and out of heavy grief and crying, I feel so supported.

And underneath it all I connect with a calm and peace. I am so grateful for the Dharma, Crones Counsel and practice.
All my love to you, Katherine Barr



*Love
loving
itself in
form: ...*

*"I AM
BEAUTIFUL"*



local paper wanted to also interview me for an article about the group's activities, I have had a delightful experience of hearing from so many people who read the article, and wanted to praise me for my successes in aging. I am very proud to have aged well, and continue to practice many ways to stay physically, mentally, and spiritually much younger than my years on

earth suggest.

Crones Counsel is so empowering, as well as motivating. I was extremely impressed by those who told their stories. The "crown" was unique. Whoever made it must have been thinking that few of us have ever been "crowned" for anything in our whole lives — much less received a standing ovation!

— DOROTHY RIGGS VINSON

[NOTE: Her newspaper story is reprinted on Page 6.]



I didn't know what to expect arriving at the Crones Counsel in Boulder, except that I would meet my longtime friend Enid Williams, alias Tiger/Meadowlark, at the conference. She's told me over the years how much she enjoys Crones Counsel. Having her there was all I really needed, to see her in her crone glory! Seeing so many different types of women at the CC amazed me. They appeared to be all ages, such as the young woman who played the didgeridoo, women my age (sunny side of 60), to the elders. I was happy to finally meet Enid's friend, Ann Emerson! I felt the spirit of CC the first night with the altar where we could put a sacred object and that the four directions were called into the circle. I enjoyed a lot of the workshops and especially loved hearing the daily powerful and life-affirming women's stories. The daily small circle was an important place to connect, be more intimate, laugh, cry, give and get support. I enjoyed Susan Ann Stauffer's workshop on "The Old Woman of the Feminist Movement: Are We Indeed a Cadre of Golden Women?", regarding her years of research on CC. I am planning to lead a

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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.

When the hotel manager came in to be thanked, our standing ovation overcame him. He made it only a few feet into the room before fleeing! ... some employees said they sensed a unified power emanating from our gathering, and claimed it was their favorite group of clients ever.

— PHYLLIS CLIFTON, CC IV, Oct 24-27, 1996, Boise, Idaho

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

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Sharing, bonding with strangers, mutual understanding, emotional support, tolerance, a great and puckish slice of humor, open-hearted kindness, a great ease of being with a large group of women feeling understood and embraced, literally and figuratively, hearing very few contrary, critical, or complaining comments in four days of being together. What a refreshing experience and blessing!" — MAIJA KATLAPS, CC VII, October 14-17, 1999 — Estes Park, Colorado

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group for women 55+ and have been gathering information on ways to create safe and sacred space. My hopes are for women to be empowered, heal, and grow by sharing their life experiences, fears, struggles, confusions, and especially the aging process. In Susan Ann's workshop I loved the idea of the crones "laying the 'tracks'," being the pioneers of creating an "old age like we've never seen before; the new old age for women that works for everyone." It gave me so much "food for thought." It was fun participating in the crone follies (the light sticks that danced, then formed the heart), perusing the talented artisans again and again, and most of all, the incredible spiral dance we ended with. I left feeling like I don't need to be "afraid" of the aging process, that we are fortunate to have these wise and blessed women to guide "us." I also left with more than the one friend I came to join! Although I couldn't possibly have met everyone, several women truly hold a special place in my heart. I only hope that I can make it to Asilomar to meet up with these and other incredible crones.

— **HOLLY ALOHA JAYNES**, Crone-in-Training



One-hundred and thirty-seven Crones gathered in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in Boulder, Colorado. A beautiful city in the splendor of fall; and the weather was perfect! I've said it before, and I'm sure I'll say it again, but Crones Counsel XIV "Crones Journey" was the best!

A highlight for me was my Crone Circle, which was outstanding in every way! We met each day on the sunny patio, creating an altar of love, healing, and friendship. Sharing space with my roommate, a woman I had not previously met, was another highlight. Della Huber and I really clicked, and it was fun to get to know her and spend time with her. "Honoring the Elders" was quite special this year with the added feature of the bios. It was a wonderful ceremony offering us the opportunity to get to know our beloved over-80s much better. And how can I not rave about the drumming and dancing, which is always so energizing and so much fun.

But what I truly love most about Crones Counsel, and what I especially felt at this Counsel is our Community. I love how we come together and don't form cliques. I love how I feel as comfortable attending a Board Meeting as I do sharing lunch with a

friend. As I flowed from Wisdom Circle to Workshop, or just hanging out in the Vendor Room, I felt at home. More than once I found myself asking a group if I might join them when I found myself eating alone. And I love how our Community comes together for storytelling and in Wisdom Circles where we not only share our experiences with each other, but offer love and support in tangible ways. So continues our Crones Journey.

— **WIN FIANDACA**



Well organized with lots of space for magic, those are my first thoughts about this latest gathering. Reconnecting with dear and profound friends I only get to see once a year. Drumming and singing to my heart's content is so very important to me, and I got to many times this year. The twin emotions of laughter and crying happened so much that I felt filled to overflowing with joy in your company.

Crones Counsel is so much a part of who I am that the longing for the next gathering begins almost before the last one ends. I just do not understand WHY we don't fill the hotel every time we meet!

— **MARTA QUEST**





A Crowning Stage of Life

80-year-old Dorothy Vinson is staying fit mentally and physically as a member of Crones Counsel, which honors wise older women.

by Patrice Stewart, The Decatur Daily staff writer

NOW THAT SHE'S 80, SHE'S A CALENDAR GIRL

Because Crones Counsel published this calendar, it is filled with crones instead of pin-up girls.

Dorothy Vinson defies categorization, but anything that calls attention to the wisdom and accomplishments of older women is fine with her. This Decatur woman believes in keeping mentally sharp and physically fit, especially in the second half of life.

Giving brain, body a workout

Her schedule would be daunting for a 25-year-old: Pilates class twice a week, yoga three times a week, a Boot Scooters line-dancing practice session and perhaps a performance, gatherings of three book clubs a month, three bridge groups, a gourmet dinner group, volunteer work, taking food to friends, gardening, and much more.

She balances all that with travel, shopping, visits to family members in California, Texas, and elsewhere, trips to a spa and more activities to give the brain and body a workout.

"I'm so glad I can play bridge at this later age of life. I've read that you should do things that challenge your mind, and I never was good at crossword puzzles," Vinson said.

Her life is a rich patchwork of interesting people, places, and activities. Crones Counsel is an example. With Huntsville friend Dottie Little, Vinson attended her first Crones national gathering in 2002. "I said I wasn't coming back until I was 80," when she would be considered a Crone Elder, she said. After celebrating her 80th birthday May 22, she registered for the autumn Crones gathering in Boulder, Colo.

She was hooked by the accomplishments of various Crones, such as the grandmother who joined her granddaughter in learning to fly. "I was so impressed, I decided these are the kinds of women I want to be around, because they are exciting women doing interesting things in their older years."

Empowerment group

Crones Counsel is an empowerment group for women, she said. It recognizes the accomplishments of older women and promotes equality for all while "fostering understanding across diverse perspectives of age, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, and spirituality," according to its newsletter, *CroneTimes*.

The counsel, which doesn't have a local group meeting,

selected its name to reclaim the original meaning of the term crone: "An elder woman who embodies wisdom and embraces both the light and the dark sides of her life."

Older women used to be valued more for their wisdom, healing, and mediation skills and moral leadership. The term counsel, rather than council, was deliberately chosen to reflect the expected sharing of life experiences.

At national gatherings, they attend workshops, exchange information, and tell stories, along with singing, dancing, and drumming, and then go out into the world with more power, knowledge, and energy for whatever lies ahead.

Crones sometimes wear crazy hats and beat drums, but they also collect money for homeless shelters for older women and other causes. They learn about subjects such as numerology, jewelry-making, journal writing, natural cures, taking risks, and thriving in sessions after the morning Wisdom Circle, storytelling, and more. Vinson likes that, because this woman who earned four degrees never wants to stop learning.

She spent her first year at the Texas State College for Women, but earned a bachelor's in speech education, and a master's in political science from North Texas State. While rearing three daughters, she got her doctor of education in curriculum instruction from the University of Kansas, where she was the first woman to be awarded a teaching fellowship. Later she earned a post-doctoral master's degree in public administration from University of Southern California.

Her favorite experience was her year as a visiting professor at the Federal Executive Institute in Charlottesville, Va. "That's when I really grew mentally," Vinson recalled. She taught courses such as "Plays as Case Studies" to classes from the Secret Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Police Department, and similar agencies. She even took them on domestic policy field trips.

Her interest in topics such as gender-role issues took her on research trips to countries such as Iraq, Egypt, and China. Along the way, she met Presidents Truman, Nixon, Kennedy, and Johnson. She was elected district Democratic Committeewoman in Texas, Kansas, and California, and she did a case study on federal prisoners in Kansas.

She "retired" in 1986 from teaching political science, public administration, and other courses at San Diego State University, but continued to teach one semester a year.

Vinson still vividly remembers her early jobs: stocking a 5-and-10-cent store for 18 cents an hour at 14, and filing and

working as a clerk-typist at the courthouse at 15 and 16. “I learned shorthand and typing from the coach of our football team at Wellington High School,” she said.

Her home is filled with objects she found in her travels around the world. Many trips were made after the Texas native married Mack Vinson in 1978. They came in and out of Decatur between trips to Greece and other places and finally settled in Decatur in 1993. Between them, they have five daughters and 11 grandchildren, and he has four great-grandchildren.

Vinson often takes on new activities, such as Pilates exercise classes. She’s done yoga for 25 years, and she performs with the Boot Scooters of Decatur General Hospital’s Lifestyles program for seniors. She also volunteers in the Lifestyles office, keeping the files up to date.

She thinks participation in Crones Counsel also adds to her life and helps her focus on aging well. “This bunch of women is crazy,” she admits, showing a photo of herself wearing the

Crones hat of vines while being recognized as one of the Elder Crones in Boulder.

When it was her time to speak, “I told them those of us 80 and over had paved the way, and I got a lot of applause,” Vinson said.

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

The “Gossip Game”

by Ramona Adams



Last night I was sorting through some of my Crones Counsel papers, reliving many of the wonderful memories I have experienced over these past years as a member of the incredible group known as the Crones Counsel. There have been fourteen such Counsel meetings to date, and I have been fortunate enough to attend all of them. How

did I ever find my way to such an amazing group of women?

I was pondering this question when an article published in the January 2006, Volume 5, Number 1 edition of the *CroneTimes* caught my eye. The article was entitled, “A New Zealand Perspective,” and I quote:

“So, how did we find our way to the thirteenth Crones Counsel gathering? You might well ask! It was rather like a gossip game — Marion told Ann, who mentioned it to Gay and Gloria, who said ‘Let’s do it!’ Gay then met Annie, who was visiting New Zealand and passed it on to her; then she brought Kim, an old American friend from Los Angeles. Amazing how things can travel around the world these days. So we all arrived in San Diego not really knowing what we had signed up for; however, something deep inside each of us had said, ‘Go!’”

How amazing it was for me to learn that nearly fifteen years after the initial Crones Counsel I met in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, women were still finding their way to Crones Counsel in the same curious “gossip game” way as the first group of women found their way to Jackson Hole to “test” the interest of women in holding a Crones Counsel at all.

The decision to experiment with holding a Crones Counsel began at a dinner party hosted by Shauna Adix in her Salt Lake City home. It was simply a meeting of a few friends who came together to share a meal. As we talked, we began wondering together about what older women did when they retired from their assigned work at home or at the office. We finally decided to find out by mentioning the possibility of a Crones Counsel meeting to our friends — just as the New Zealand group mentioned it to their friends. Our friends seemed interested and also said, “Let’s do it!” So we decided to test the waters and see who might come to such a gathering for older women.

When we went to the manager of the hotel in Jackson Hole to reserve space for our first Crones meeting, he said, “And how many of you will be there for the meeting?” We had no idea of how many might come, but we assured him that, “at least the four of us would be there.” Hesitantly he signed us up. We then played our “gossip game” and during the summer mentioned the meeting to our friends (just as Marion told Ann, who mentioned it to Gay and Gloria) and well over 150 women came and said “Let’s do it!” and so we did.

Like all of our gatherings, the first Crones Counsel was a resounding success. No one wanted to let our experiences together end. We had found a sisterhood of community, of love, of caring, and of sharing. Like our New Zealand sisters, we had found “love, fun, laughter, no judgments or expectations.” For those who participated in Crones Counsel I, it was “unforgettable, life changing, spirit lifting,” and we were ever so thankful that we had played the “gossip game,” just as our New Zealand sisters did when they came to Crones Counsel XIII in San Diego.

As long as we all keep coming ourselves and mentioning it to our friends — playing the “gossip game” as our New Zealand group suggests — we will be able to watch this wonderful group of women grow and expand and have the opportunity to experience this “unforgettable, life-changing, spirit-lifting experience.”

How Much Is a Heifer?

by Mnimaka

It was the last morning that eight women of the Garden of The Gods Crone Circle would meet at the Boulder Crones Counsel in October of 2006.

We were women younger and older, from Ohio, Washington, California, Colorado, Oregon and Washington, of widely varying circumstance and experience. Of Susan, Joan, Mnimaka, Sharon, Joy, Jaime, Jan, Diane, and Marvelle, some of us had been sitting in circles of women since the first Crones Counsel and some were newer to the wonder of sharing such sacred space.

We had come together on this morning, looked into one another's eyes, opened our sacred space, joined hands, and shared our opening thoughts. One of the grandmothers present related how she had been moved by her last evening's viewing of a documentary on the desperate need of one African village where children or frail grandmothers were caring for children, because virtually all the parents had been lost to disease and war. What was needed was for some sustainable enterprise to help them lift themselves out of a hopeless hand-to-mouth existence.

On hearing this recounting of the tale, we all fell into a silent meditation for many minutes. Then, as I opened my eyes, I saw another head pop up across the circle from me, eyes wide open, and I heard Susan's strong voice saying, "How much is a heifer?" We were immediately infused with a kind of energy that began to rise from within our midst. By the time we closed our circle we had a pledge to research the question to be ready for the Counsel's closing session, and were on fire as we were told that there were possibly funds available from this year's Crones Counsel to support such a project, so that the question could be put before all of the women present whether they would support a gift from Crones Counsel XIV to such a village.

By the time of the general session, the Garden of the Gods women had determined that the cost of providing a heifer, and the continuing support and training to a village would be \$500, and further there was a current matching grant by the Preserving African Pastoral Society through the sixty-year-old nonprofit Heifer Project of Martinsburg, West Virginia, so that our pledge of \$500 would immediately provide two heifers for a village, thereby increasing the benefit beyond what we ourselves could provide.

The motion was presented at the closing session and overwhelmingly approved by all the women. Crones Counsel XIV would provide a gift of \$500 that would result in the delivery of two heifers and training to provide a sustainable source of nutrition, enterprise and culture, and increasing benefit for a group of humans we would have never known existed before the Garden of the Gods Crone Circle met that morning in October.

"When the Grandmothers speak, the earth will be healed."

— HOPI PROPHECY

Crackpots

from Jan Lindsay treebanks@pabrump.com

An elderly Chinese woman had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole, which she carried across her neck.

One of the pots had a crack in it while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

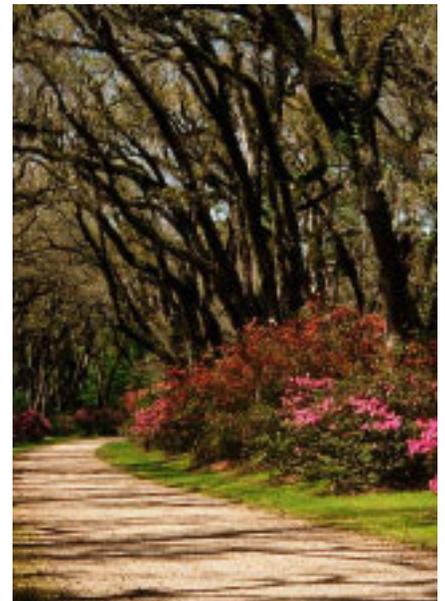
For a full two years this went on daily, with the woman bringing home only one and a half pots of water. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it could only do half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be bitter failure, it spoke to the woman one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house."

The old woman smiled, "Did you notice that there are flowers on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, so I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back, you water them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house."

Each of us has our own unique flaw. But it's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives together so very interesting and rewarding.

So, to all of my crackpot friends, have a great day and remember to smell the flowers on your side of the path!



***T**here was a talent show where women in their 60s and 70s sang some of the raunchiest songs I've ever heard. I haven't laughed so much in years ... I woke up Sunday morning crying because it was almost over ..."*
— CAROLE A. BROWN, CC V,
October 16-19, 1997 — San Diego, California

Crone of Puget Sound Honors Its Elders

“These women are the pioneers in a new time of aging ...”

by Janet Parks

The air was filled with enthusiastic energy when nearly 60 members of Crone of Puget Sound met on Saturday afternoon, March 25, 2006, to pay tribute to their club's elders. What a treat to see women, age 80 and older, applauded for their age. A rare occasion in our society, indeed. No chairs a rockin' for these gals because they all live up to Crone's motto — "growing old with power, passion, and purpose."

This jubilant "Honoring Our Elders" celebration took place during the group's spring meeting at ElderHealth Northwest in north Seattle. Twenty-two of the 34 honorees were present for the occasion and given the recognition and reverence they greatly deserved.

"These women are the pioneers in a new time of aging," said Pat Lewis, Elder Celebration committee member, during the inspiring ceremony. "With their wisdom, courage, vitality, and compassion, and for just being themselves, they are an achievement in this, the third act of their lives."

As she pointed out to them, "Elderhood is still a time to be learning and growing, yet taking time to reflect on life. Aging well is a goal worthwhile. So we honor you today."

And in turn, each of these honorees, with a combined 2,400 years of living, had pearls of wisdom to pass on to their younger club members.

"Stay active, both mentally and physically," advised Ellen Fawcett, who celebrated her 83rd birthday that



Jean Wuthnow, Christina Horst, Happie Byers (in back), Virginia Reed, honorees

day. "If you are tired of same-old, same-old, meet someone new, cook something different, drive a new way to the post office, take a bus ride to a place you've never visited, and exercise your mind and body."

The oldest Crone in the group, Hannah May, who turned 95 last month, said, "Getting old is a matter of adjusting to what comes along. Exercising every day is important for longevity. Companionship and social engagement are vital, and of course, family and friends."

Eileen Allen, age 87, reminded everyone that being happy is

an inside job. "I'm the only one who can make myself happy or unhappy. It takes practice, and I practice each and every day."

Said 80-year-old Christina Horst. "An important lesson can be learned from our animals. When they become old and disabled, they don't whine and complain, but continue to do THE BEST THEY CAN, with a cheerful attitude and a loving, generous heart. WAY TO GO!"

Several remarks brought laughter, such as when Claire Nilsson, 80, spoke of advice her grandmother gave her when she was young. "A lady never starts a catfight and as long as she remains a lady, she will never lose one." And Julie Campbell, age 85, offered, "keep an open mind but not so open that your brains fall out."

To illustrate the Crone motto, one elder, Rosal Mangiante, age 89, announced that she started her own business three



Audience in standing ovation after all honorees had read their words of wisdom



Anne-Marie Hackenberger, honoree

years ago, proving that there is life after 80.

This heartwarming event was a first for Crone of Puget Sound, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in September. Founded in 1986, the group's purpose is to change the image of aging. Through its programs and varied activities,

Crone offers

support, encouragement and information to its 150 members who live in greater Seattle. They meet once a month with agendas of special interest to aging. The members also participate in small subgroups, such as walkers, singers, scrabble players, writers, or those who just meet for conversations, thus providing opportunities to widen their circle of friends.

Whatever these Crones choose to do, they support one another as they journey through their senior years and have a great time doing it. Within their club and away, they live with power, passion and purpose.

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Jeannette Monigold, 91 years old, honoree

COME! *Celebrate Wise Women* BY THE SEA

Rest, relax, and renew by the sea.

*Meet new friends and embrace
those friends of old.*

*Listen to the waves as they breathe
in and out ... following
the ancient rhythm of time.*

*For it is within time we have learned
the oneness of all.*

On a beautiful stretch of the California coast, nestled among the pine and sand dunes is a "Refuge by the Sea," a magical place called Asilomar. Rustic buildings made with cedar, redwood, and stone comprise this quaint scenic retreat. Celebrating a landmark 50-year anniversary, this special State Beach and Conference ground was designed by architect Julia Morgan in 1913. A distinguishing honor, as well as a rich part of history, because Julia Morgan was California's first licensed female architect.



Celebrate Wise Women

SEPTEMBER 5-9, 2007
ASILOMAR, CALIF

Register Today:

Make Checks payable to **Crones Counsel, Inc.**, c/o Meera Messmer, 8055 E. Coronado Road, Tucson, AZ 85750. Phone 520-760-3905, Email: GMessy2@aol.com. Or Credit Cards may be used by registering online at: www.CronesCounsel.org

Between January 1, 2007
and July 15, 2007: \$150 members,
\$165 non-members.

After July 15, 2007: \$190 members,
\$200 non-members

*Asilomar has changed its
reservations' policy. Register with
Meera first, then she will send a
special housing form to us. We
cannot choose buildings; it is
first-come, first-served.*

See you by the Sea



the elder woman sits quietly

by Christina M. James ©

the elder woman sits quietly
whilst i rant and rave and dramatize my day

the elder woman sits quietly watching
while I expand my energy in 1000 different ways
stressing, fussing, musing, loving, lusting, losing, winning,
whining, planning, defining, grinding ... my teeth into
throbbing, aching, paining
stress knots in my neck

the elder woman sits quietly whilst i spend my moments
falling into traps of my own setting
and then meditating, levitating, visualizing, astral traveling,
my way out

once in awhile after an exhausting dance of some sort
i finally listen
but only if I'm shoved up against a wall with nowhere to go

what's wrong with me? i cry in angst at her feet where i have
dropped

the elder woman sits quietly and contemplates my question

and I of course want a big gigantic answer that wows my ego
and strokes my pride and makes me feel special

"you are on your path," she says
as she looks through me with her endless lifetimes of knowing

for a long moment i sit quietly with her deep within looking out
at the world going by

i feel like jumping up and getting a special spiritual indian
blanket to wrap us both in and just finish out my life lying on
the earth watching the stars and the sun come up

i begin to make plans to sit in more circles and do more
ceremony, and attend more gatherings, and work hard on my
so-called "enlightenment" and find a way to stay in this quiet
place where she resides within me

after some moments the ancient beautiful elder looks through
me again and speaks gently ... firmly ...
in a voice that sounded beyond time and space

"all that you wish to do is good, it is good, all part of the path
but much awaits in the everyday of the world"

"your work is not done ...
continue the work, the lessons and then ...
and then ... there will be another path awaiting"

i look in the mirror and there she is ... stunning ...

as the phone rings, the image fades and i see only me and my
earth suit staring back

the elder woman sits quietly

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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 Boulder, Colorado. These 2007
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.

***B**y the time of Boise, our fourth Counsel,
we knew who we are, we are secure in that
knowledge; without reservation we are learning to
make gifts of ourselves. We can rejoice in
another's healing though our own pain may
persist. Story-telling is no longer merely a
listening, sharing time – it has become a sacred
ritual of joys and sorrows shared."*

— **MAGGIE ROWLETT, CC IV,**
October 24-27, 1996 — Boise, Idaho

***C**rones Counsel IV began as a gathering
of women from different walks of life and different
parts of the country, and quickly became a
gathering of ecstatic women."*

— **MNIMAKA, CC IV**

Incoming President's Message

by Nancy Lehto



As the New Year begins I find that I am truly excited and challenged by this new and wonderful opportunity to serve as your sixth President of Crones Counsel, Inc. I have great shoes to fill and will endeavor to walk in the footsteps of those before me.

From my first experience at a Crones gathering, I knew that being part of such an organization was a path I wished to walk. I felt I had come home. I found a circle of women I could turn to for support, friendship and wisdom. Not long after my first gathering, I encouraged my local circle of Evergreen Crones to accept the task of putting on a national gathering here in Colorado. I wanted to combine my love of planning and organizing events with my newfound love of Crones. I joined the Crones Counsel Board of Directors as the representative of the 1999 planning committee, which was made up of women from several Colorado Crone Circles. Time has passed and the Colorado Crones once again organized the national gathering for 2006, and I rejoined the board as vice-president, with the goal of the Presidency in October.

A Year Filled with Promise

As the New Year is a time of beginnings, it is appropriate for me to take on this task of President now instead of waiting until October, as would have ordinarily been the case. A New Year is always filled with promise and we on the Board step forward into it with energies refreshed and new resolutions in hand. The Crones Counsel Board is made up of talented and experienced women who are willing to spend much volunteer time and effort in support of the national gatherings, as well as in doing other tasks such as the website and *CroneTimes*. Our mission, and we do choose to accept it, is to provide the structure for the organization, and we find these tasks worthwhile because the

women who attend the gatherings volunteer to help, spread the word, and sing and drum as an expression of their enjoyment of getting together.

As a membership/non-profit organization, we look to you, the members, to guide us in how we can support you. We hold the essence, and through the organization and gatherings, pass it on to those who wish to embrace it.

My personal goal as your new President is to follow the foundation of what Shauna Adix and her colleagues began so long ago. With much gratitude, I accept this challenge.

Please let us know how we may better serve you. Since everything is planned and carried out by volunteers, also let us know if *you* would like to help plan a gathering. One of my personal goals is to maintain a strong and direct connection to our members, so please call or email me with comments, concerns, questions, and/or suggestions.

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