Honoring the Sisterhood of Women

A SEAMELESSLY SMOOTH-RUNNING FEW DAYS

by Elizabeth Davis

This year the annual Crones Counsel was held in Seattle. Twenty-six Puget Sound Crones attended — and the eight or so first timers met to pool our reactions. Most of us would do it again, maybe next year in Atlanta; a few would not. But all of us were having a good time.

What is Crones Counsel about? I think it has several purposes, all done extremely well.

1) Honor the sisterhood of women and their connections. People everywhere were connecting nonstop, trading email addresses, info on where to get that beautiful dress, where we want to eat tonight.

2) Honor the elders (80 plus) and their wisdom. Repeatedly the group applauded elders for this, that, and the other thing. It was a good time to be over 80.

3) In all ways, help individual women stand up in front of the entire convention and tell their stories— of pain, triumph, wisdom, or any other aspect of life. I had no idea there were so many of those aspects.

4) Code Purple, a new determination to spread quiet, loving, and firm elder women’s wisdom through our communities. The day before the conference ended, this was put into action, by 20 silent women who linked hands and slowly, purposefully, walked five yelling you-are-going-to-hell demonstrators out the front door of the hotel.

There was also a variety of workshops — enough to appeal to each of us. Those of us who drove home each night wondered what we had missed (though we were glad of the saved money). We were all impressed by the organizational ability of those “someones” in the background — thanks to them we had events starting and ending on time, paperwork packets complete, suggestions for the hotel staff swiftly implemented, a seamlessly smooth-running few days.

The heart of CC seems to be the storytelling sessions, about two hours each day. The stories were wrenchingly sad, outrageously funny, heart-warming descriptions of good deaths, unexpected new takes on life, and almost anything else. Oral tradition fused with live drama. What more could one ask?

[HONORING THE SISTERHOOD, con’t. on Page 3]

Words of Wisdom from Our Most-Honored Elder

by Lydia Gallick, age 95

When anyone seeks advice from me, I listen and let them solve the problem. All situations resolve themselves, sometimes with and sometimes without my help. Worrying and fear never fixed anything. Look for the good and it will be found. Let go and let God.
As I look forward to the New Year, I reflect on the old. New and old. Beginning and end. I look to the seasons when I reflect on the world as a whole and on my world. Winter is a time of sleep for the earth. Plants and animals both hibernate until rebirth in the spring. So can we rest for a time. December, particularly, can be a time of peace. No need for the hustle and bustle of holidays. They can be wonderful times of sharing friendships and family without the stress of commercialism. Let Mother Nature take over the decorating. Share the task of preparing food with all of the family instead of taking it all on yourself. Sit back and enjoy. Pass on the baton of holiday entertaining to the younger ones. It can be their turn now.

As I sit by the window and watch the snow fall, I think of years past and friendships come and gone. My wonderful memories can fill hours of restful time. And I think of January, which is for me a time of planning. After the New Year celebrations are over, I plan for the new year. What do I want to accomplish this year? What do I want to bring into my life? What do I want to let go?

The new year is filled with promises and planning. I am planning my spring garden, which here high in the Rockies is not much more than a few pots unless I can get my greenhouse up this year. I am planning my work — what I will accomplish. It helps to outline each month so I know what is coming and how to spread out the work to meet deadlines without last-minute stress. I am thinking about the CC board and what we need to accomplish this year. I reflect on what we have accomplished and where we need to go. Our wonderful new website is up and running smoothly now — thanks to many hours put in by our board director and web manager, Suzanne Gruba. I am fortunate to have such an accomplished group of women sharing the joys and the tasks of Crones Counsel.

When I think of Crones Counsel planning, I wonder what you all would like for us this coming year. I am looking forward to Crones Counsel XVII to be held just outside Atlanta, Georgia, at a wonderful resort where we can eat together, enjoy the beautiful fall weather in outdoor spaces, listen to our sisters’ stories, and attend the always-incredible workshops. The CC board is in the process of planning Crones Counsel XVIII. Look for news of the location at the next gathering and in the next CroneTimes.

Have a wonderful year. Let me know if I can be of assistance to you. Share your thoughts and dreams for Crones Counsel.

— ALICE YEE, age 89
A COUNSEL FULL OF MIRACLES  

by Omi Preheim Church

By now readers of CroneTimes have undoubtedly told and retold the story of the peacemaking miracle of Crones Counsel XVI in Seattle: an incredible bookend moment, which followed the opening Storytelling memory of Grandmothers on Mount Rushmore. The powerful and peaceful movement of elders making a difference in the greater world gladdens and strengthens the hearts of crones everywhere. [See stories on Pages 10 and 11.]

Personal miracles were readily available as well. Riding an elevator with a certain former Crones Counsel president who was belting out “Wild Thing”; then stepping off the elevator with a combined zany impulse to create a bit of fun fluff for the Follies became a delightful miracle for me. Back in a hotel suite, we racked our brains and laughed ourselves silly remembering song snippets from our youth. Three aging amigas not only had phenomenal fun singing in the Follies (we really dug the enthusiastic applause from our “fans”), we also planted new seeds of friendship, which root deeper as we continue conversations begun at Counsel.

The personal and collective connectivity of Crones Counsel is a major miracle indeed. Thanks to Crone, I am blessed with new anam caram — friends of my soul.

DRY FEET AND WARM HEART TIME  

by Meg Randle

Enid, my bus buddy, and I had a delightful bus ride into downtown Seattle where we had uninterrupted time to share stories and connect deeper with humor and wisdom. We found we had yet another connection: our nursing training had both begun in St. Louis — nearly 50 years apart.

We were dropped off in front of the 1961 Space Needle. Just the short walk from the bus in the rain reminded us “desert dwellers” that sandals do not work for strolling. Enid suggested that we spend time observing all of greater Seattle from the top of the Needle. This gave us a majestic bird’s-eye tour while keeping our feet warm and dry.

Feeling like tourists, we stopped at the gift shop before returning to the bus. Enid (85) tried to purchase a bottle of local wine but the cashier’s computer would not accept the fact that she was over 21! Crone Age must be ageless, and at that moment the computer was unable to recognize the benefits. Enid did not mind showing her ID, but the cashier cleverly decided to put her own birthday in to complete this wine purchase. The long line of patient people smiled knowingly at the cleverness of these women beating a computer.

Thank you to those who participated in the Advance Directives Workshop for Healthcare. I enjoyed sharing topics of aging with you. We told our grief and loss stories, and we learned from each other. Then we committed to shaping our own health-care decisions. As a hospice health-care worker, I pledge to deepen my support for such beautiful, positive, and peaceful warrior crones.

Over the past ten years, I have been blessed with ongoing Crone influences in my end-of-life care practice within the current health-care system, ever championed by Julien Puzey and Marie Fulmer. I happened to meet them as their nurse while they were caregivers in hospice for family and then as a member of Julien’s “chemo buddy team,” and finally as a colleague in Julien’s passionate work in end-of-life care. Julien, in her final months, continued to speak of the need to carry on making palliative-supportive care a public-health issue. She understood that when we work toward developing a more supportive care system, we will be there for our friends and family. As caregivers and care receivers, we can better integrate choice, comfort, and dignity along the health-care journey until death.

I WAS NOT DISAPPOINTED  

by Marilyn Nutter

I attended Crones Counsel for the first time in Seattle of 2008. Friends had told me about the Counsel for many years but I never had the opportunity to attend. As part of a Women’s Circle in the California Bay Area, I had been honored in a croning ceremony when I turned 55 and had partaken in such ceremonies myself. Though none of my sister crones could attend with me, I was determined to go. I was not disappointed.

I was greeted warmly when I arrived and one of the first women I met was Enid Williams, an elder Crone who welcomed me, guided me into the meeting room for the opening ceremony, and sat with me throughout. Later, listening to the women speak their truth during storytelling, I found I was at once exhilarated and emotionally drained. I was glad to be able

[HONORING THE SISTERHOOD, con’t. on Page 4]
to return to my room in the hotel for meditative down time before going to sleep. It gave me time to reflect on the gifts that had been given to me in those very intimate moments.

The next day, I found partaking in the Crones Circle was equally rewarding, as each woman shared her special knowledge, wisdom, and insight with the group. I discovered that one of the women in my group, Kianna Bader, lived fairly close to me in California and we agreed that we would stay in touch.

I was given the opportunity to present a workshop on the “Sacred Feminine,” a program I had recently developed. I was hopeful that it would be well received by the women who attended. I was so encouraged by the positive energy of the group. It was a wonderful, life-affirming experience and the women there gave me the inspiration I needed to continue my work in the area of women’s spirituality.

**What Is It Like to Serve on the Board?**

by Judy Neihart

I have so appreciated the opportunity to be on the Crones Counsel board. With each board member accepting responsibility for a part of the business of the group, the planning and implementing goes smoothly. I am “registrar in training,” so that when Meera’s term is over, the transition will be easier than having to learn it all on one’s own. The learning, chance to make new friends, and feeling a real part of the group has been exciting. I am looking forward to Atlanta in 2009 with the board meeting in the Spring and the Gathering in the fall.

**HONORING THE SISTERHOOD** [Con’t. from Page 3]

**A Suggestion from Our Eldest Elder**

by Lydia Gallick (95)

I have recently acquired a new interest and would encourage you to do the same. It is fun to do something new and different. My new thing is putting paint on paper. I hesitate to call it art but it is my art. And it is amazing how good it makes me feel to just participate in these painting classes. I pay attention, follow instructions, make sure I fill up the page ... and presto I have something on the paper that vaguely looks like what I attempted to do. Actually, I put it aside, look at it a week later, and it looks even better.

So jump in, join me, and try something new.

**THE GIVE-AWAY TABLE**

**Full Circle**

by Sandy Eno

I love the give-away table. To me it is a physical representation of the rich bounty we, the Grandmothers, offer every day. We may not always think our gifts are important, but to someone else they can be priceless.

In 2007 at Asilomar I reached out with my heart for a small object from the table. A beautiful Celtic-looking silver ring slipped right on my finger. Through a rather difficult year I wore that ring and it gave me hope.

This year, as usual, I carefully selected a gift to place on the table. As I was packing for Crones Counsel I put the little silver ring on my finger and knew at once that someone else needed it. A bit reluctantly I wrapped the ring and placed it inside my offering (how convenient it was a receptacle).

To the woman who chose my gift, may the ring bring you as much comfort and pleasure as it did me.

**Response by Marta Quest**

Wow! I am just blown away by the course my special Celtic knot ring has followed. At Asilomar, I put the ring on the Give-Away table ... reluctantly. It has always had special meaning for me because of my Celtic heritage, as well as the never-ending circle of the knot, which reminds me of eternal life.

In 2007 at Asilomar I reached out with my heart for a small object from the table. A beautiful Celtic-looking silver ring slipped right on my finger. Through a rather difficult year I wore that ring and it gave me hope.

This year, as usual, I carefully selected a gift to place on the table. As I was packing for Crones Counsel I put the little silver ring on my finger and knew at once that someone else needed it. A bit reluctantly I wrapped the ring and placed it inside my offering (how convenient it was a receptacle).

To the woman who chose my gift, may the ring bring you as much comfort and pleasure as it did me.

**Telling people I appreciate what they are doing lightens the task performed and creates good will.**

— RUTH WARD, age 83

**What Is It Like to Serve on the Board?**

by Judy Neihart

I have so appreciated the opportunity to be on the Crones Counsel board. With each board member accepting responsibility for a part of the business of the group, the planning and implementing goes smoothly. I am “registrar in training,” so that when Meera’s term is over, the transition will be easier than having to learn it all on one’s own. The learning, chance to make new friends, and feeling a real part of the group has been exciting. I am looking forward to Atlanta in 2009 with the board meeting in the Spring and the Gathering in the fall.

**What Is It Like to Serve on the Board?**

by Judy Neihart

I have so appreciated the opportunity to be on the Crones Counsel board. With each board member accepting responsibility for a part of the business of the group, the planning and implementing goes smoothly. I am “registrar in training,” so that when Meera’s term is over, the transition will be easier than having to learn it all on one’s own. The learning, chance to make new friends, and feeling a real part of the group has been exciting. I am looking forward to Atlanta in 2009 with the board meeting in the Spring and the Gathering in the fall.

**Response by Marta Quest**

Wow! I am just blown away by the course my special Celtic knot ring has followed. At Asilomar, I put the ring on the Give-Away table ... reluctantly. It has always had special meaning for me because of my Celtic heritage, as well as the never-ending circle of the knot, which reminds me of eternal life.

In 2007 at Asilomar I reached out with my heart for a small object from the table. A beautiful Celtic-looking silver ring slipped right on my finger. Through a rather difficult year I wore that ring and it gave me hope.

This year, as usual, I carefully selected a gift to place on the table. As I was packing for Crones Counsel I put the little silver ring on my finger and knew at once that someone else needed it. A bit reluctantly I wrapped the ring and placed it inside my offering (how convenient it was a receptacle).

To the woman who chose my gift, may the ring bring you as much comfort and pleasure as it did me.

**What Is It Like to Serve on the Board?**

by Judy Neihart

I have so appreciated the opportunity to be on the Crones Counsel board. With each board member accepting responsibility for a part of the business of the group, the planning and implementing goes smoothly. I am “registrar in training,” so that when Meera’s term is over, the transition will be easier than having to learn it all on one’s own. The learning, chance to make new friends, and feeling a real part of the group has been exciting. I am looking forward to Atlanta in 2009 with the board meeting in the Spring and the Gathering in the fall.

**What Is It Like to Serve on the Board?**

by Judy Neihart

I have so appreciated the opportunity to be on the Crones Counsel board. With each board member accepting responsibility for a part of the business of the group, the planning and implementing goes smoothly. I am “registrar in training,” so that when Meera’s term is over, the transition will be easier than having to learn it all on one’s own. The learning, chance to make new friends, and feeling a real part of the group has been exciting. I am looking forward to Atlanta in 2009 with the board meeting in the Spring and the Gathering in the fall.

**What Is It Like to Serve on the Board?**

by Judy Neihart

I have so appreciated the opportunity to be on the Crones Counsel board. With each board member accepting responsibility for a part of the business of the group, the planning and implementing goes smoothly. I am “registrar in training,” so that when Meera’s term is over, the transition will be easier than having to learn it all on one’s own. The learning, chance to make new friends, and feeling a real part of the group has been exciting. I am looking forward to Atlanta in 2009 with the board meeting in the Spring and the Gathering in the fall.

**What Is It Like to Serve on the Board?**

by Judy Neihart

I have so appreciated the opportunity to be on the Crones Counsel board. With each board member accepting responsibility for a part of the business of the group, the planning and implementing goes smoothly. I am “registrar in training,” so that when Meera’s term is over, the transition will be easier than having to learn it all on one’s own. The learning, chance to make new friends, and feeling a real part of the group has been exciting. I am looking forward to Atlanta in 2009 with the board meeting in the Spring and the Gathering in the fall.

**What Is It Like to Serve on the Board?**

by Judy Neihart

I have so appreciated the opportunity to be on the Crones Counsel board. With each board member accepting responsibility for a part of the business of the group, the planning and implementing goes smoothly. I am “registrar in training,” so that when Meera’s term is over, the transition will be easier than having to learn it all on one’s own. The learning, chance to make new friends, and feeling a real part of the group has been exciting. I am looking forward to Atlanta in 2009 with the board meeting in the Spring and the Gathering in the fall.

**What Is It Like to Serve on the Board?**

by Judy Neihart

I have so appreciated the opportunity to be on the Crones Counsel board. With each board member accepting responsibility for a part of the business of the group, the planning and implementing goes smoothly. I am “registrar in training,” so that when Meera’s term is over, the transition will be easier than having to learn it all on one’s own. The learning, chance to make new friends, and feeling a real part of the group has been exciting. I am looking forward to Atlanta in 2009 with the board meeting in the Spring and the Gathering in the fall.
Crones Counsel XVI Special Moments

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

About CroneTimes

CroneTimes is the official newsletter for Crones Counsel Inc. It is published twice a year, in January and July. When you attend a gathering, you will automatically receive the next four issues (or two years’ worth). It is also on our website: www.cronescounsel.org. Publisher: Crones Counsel Inc. Editor/Designer: Marta Quest. Reporter: Kianna Bader. Contributors (this issue): Elizabeth Davis, Lydia Gallick, Nancy Lehto, Mnimaka, Enid Williams, Ann Emerson, Mahtowín, Omi Preheim Church, Meg Randle, Marilyn Nutter, Sandra Eno, Jackie Gentry, Judy Neihart, Ruth Ward, Betty Brown. Photos by: Jackie Gentry, Kianna Bader, Marta Quest, Meg Randle, and Patricia Weller. Thank you!

There are a number of national magazines published for women. Some of these are: Sage Woman, The Beltane Papers, More magazine for women over 40, Pan Gaia, and New Witch. Martha Stewart also plans to launch a magazine for older women called M.

CRONE: Women Coming of Age, is the new magazine published by Ann Kreilkamp. Like the other magazines for women, it is not directly connected with Crones Counsel. However many of the women who regularly attend Crones Counsel are working on it as editors, so you may recognize their names.

THE SEATTLE PLANNING COMMITTEE: Nancy Hanson, Patricia Layden, Gay Barker, Trish Schumacher, Connie Dawson, Diane Woodworth. Thanks for all of your FABULOUS work! Sorry NANCY HANSON for not knowing your name for the Calendar. — Marta
Our lives are lived within a spiral. Sometimes we turn inward to ask questions, learn lessons, and do our interior work. Spiraling outward we support and give to others and do our work in the world. Wherever we are on the spiral, we are at the right place.

Wednesday through Sunday, October 21 through 25, Crones will gather at Simpsonwood — a full dining, lodging, conference facility billed as “seclusion in the heart of Atlanta” — to enjoy all our favorite activities plus many more treats worth the effort. The 227-acre wooded area on the Chattahoochee River provides lots of walking space, as well as a labyrinth for a quieter walk. Lodging and workshops are close together, which makes for easy senior mobility. Seniors (age 80 and above) even have a flat $100 registration fee to ease pocketbooks.

All communal meals guarantee lots of conversation and laughs with the whole beautiful fall environment making it — our time of year.

“TRANSFORMATION: Spiraling Through Life — Within and Without” is the 2009 theme and what better way to honor the theme than to join together to tell stories of how we have transformed through our life-challenging lessons.

Register now using the form on Page 7, or online at www.cronescounsel.org

P.S. The rooms will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis and the first who comes gets the best, ya hear?
REGISTRATION FORM

Please print clearly

NAME: ___________________________________________________________________________

ADDRESS: _______________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

TELEPHONE NUMBERS: ___________________________________________________________

BIRTH DATE: ___________________ EMAIL: __________________________________________
We need your birthday for ceremony. We communicate primarily by e-mail. Please provide.
If you have one, please include.

Is this your first time? Yes___ How did you learn of CC?_______________________________

Which CCs have you attended? ____________ Do you have special needs?________________

Do you want us to assign a roommate to share a Double/Triple/Quad Room? Yes___

If you have a roommate preference, please indicate her name ____________________________

NOTE: All roommates must request each other. Please do not name a roommate without confirming
with her first.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CC FEE:</th>
<th>till 8/15/09</th>
<th>After 8/15/09</th>
<th>Elder (80 &amp; Over)</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$175.00</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
<td>$______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| LODGING & FOOD: (Includes lodging per person 4 nights, 3 meals, and 2 snacks each day) |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Single              Double       Triple*       Quad*          |
| $525.76             $332.84       $285.49       $254.00        | $______

*Note: Triples & Quads are vintage rooms, some with lofts, and not a crone-exclusive building.

I wish to support my Wise Sisters with a 2009 donation to:

Outreach fund $ ________  CC Scholarship $ ________  Crones Counsel $_______ $________

TOTAL (Fee, Lodging & Food, and Donation) $_______

Please make check payable to CRONES COUNSEL, INC., and mail to:
Crones Counsel Registrar, c/o Meera Messmer, 8055 E. Coronado Rd.,
Tucson, AZ 85750-9659. Phone: 520/760-3905. E-mail: Gmessy2@aol.com

To pay by credit card, please register online at www.cronescounsel.org

SCHOLARSHIPS: Scholarships are available on a limited basis. For information on
scholarships and any registration questions, please contact Meera Messmer at the above
address or phone number.

REFUNDS: Cancellations up to July 31, 2009, will be given a total refund less a $25.00
processing fee. Cancellations between August 1 and September 9 will be given a total
refund less a $50.00 processing fee. No refunds for lodging or CC registration can be given
after September 10, 2009.

On Page 8 please see and sign ...

Liability Waiver and Assumption of Risk Agreement
CRONES COUNSEL XVII

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

WORKSHOPS: Contact Melody LeBaron – melody.lebaron@gmail.com or 770/518-8418, 1009 Branchwind Close, Roswell, GA 30076-3367

MARKETPLACE: Contact Amy Mitchell – amydmitch@yahoo.com or 678/592-7720, 1026 Williver Dr., Decatur, GA 30033

CIRCLE LEADERS: Contact Sabra Bowers – SabraE57@aol.com or 770/476-1859, 3514 Debbie Court, Duluth, GA 30097-3408

Please NOTE: All contributors must be registered for the gathering. In the case of artisans, the products you offer for sale must be your own creations.

LIABILITY WAIVER AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK AGREEMENT

WAIVER – Anyone attending a Crones Counsel gathering must sign a waiver of liability, just as you would when attending an Elder Hostel or other such event.

PLEASE SIGN AND DATE THE FOLLOWING:
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, and legal representatives, I release and discharge Crones Counsel, Inc., and its officers from liability for any injuries, 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 that I shall not hold Crones Counsel, Inc., responsible for such expenses.

__________________________  ____________________________
Signature                  Date
Calling oneself CRONE takes some courage. After all, in our culture, the word crone commonly implies a woman who is ugly, old, and of little value. However, more and more midlife and aging women are claiming CRONE as a name for themselves and as a concept and guide for the later years of their lives. And that’s not all: More and more women celebrate their crone status with an inspiring event — a croning celebration.

The croning celebration honors a woman who has gained wisdom from long life experience, and it offers a public rite-of-passage to mark her transition to the later years of her life. It reclaims elements of women’s spiritual traditions that were lost for many centuries, and it is part of a grassroots effort to counteract ageism and sexism. It is a time to celebrate with friends, honor elder women, accept affirmations, and extol the historical significance of the crone.

Many women choose age 50 as the marker for croning, but some choose other landmarks. Ancient crones were women who had reached menopause at a time when few women lived so long; now most women who celebrate croning are post menopausal. For some women, the time to celebrate is a time of personal significance — for example, the anniversary of a special event in one’s life, a birthday; or the initiation of a new project. Individuals who follow astrology claim that an appropriate time for croning is age 56, when Saturn returns a second time to the position in the sky where it was at the individual’s birth.

Some women want to manage every aspect of their croning events; others are content to let others plan it for them. Nonetheless, the most common pattern for planning a croning celebration is a cooperative effort by the crone-to-be and her friends who share ideas and plan activities with uniquely personal, as well as traditional, elements. Crones typically build a guest list of individuals who have been important to them, and the celebrations may be large or small — whatever is comfortable for the woman to be honored.

Croning in groups rather than individually is a comfortable option for many women. Some just don’t want to be the center of attention in an individual celebration; some prefer to share with others the experience and significance of claiming the status of crone.

The croning venue, decorations, food, music, and other arrangements reflect the honored person’s interests and personality. Photos at different periods in the crone’s life, a place for participants to write messages or draw pictures, treasured books or artwork, and favorite songs are just a few of the elements that can make the setting uniquely personal for the honored crone. Often the event focuses on a theme — from the age of the goddesses to a favorite pastime like dancing, travel, quilting, or playing a musical instrument.

While cronings can feature many activities, symbols, and objects that the celebrant and her friends wish, certain elements frequently are part of a croning ceremony:

A commemorative symbol — As part of the ritual, the honored individual typically receives a symbol of her croning. Some of the items used for this include crowns of flowers or ribbons, decorated canes, shawls, or crystals. The amethyst, a purple stone associated with wisdom and spirituality, is considered a symbol of the crone, as is the color purple.

Women’s wisdom — Elder participants share words of wisdom. The honored crone also comments on lessons she has learned through her life experience. Additionally, strength through generations and networks can be emphasized by recognizing women who made a difference in one’s life — historical figures or personal mentors, friends, or family members.

Pride in years — Participants are asked to reveal their ages to everyone present. Deliberately defying the convention that adult women shouldn’t disclose their age, this act empowers individuals to take pride in their years of life experience.

Affirmations — The honored crone has the opportunity to receive and accept affirmations from her friends. The affirmations might be statements at the occasion, notes, or creative works that underscore guests’ feelings about the new crone.

Rituals — Many crones-to-be ask women who are knowledgeable about croning traditions to lead this aspect of the event. Still others create their own ritual. A successful ritual evokes an emotional response and a sense of connectedness with other women and with women’s history; it also fits the character of the group. It is important that the ritual concepts, language, and procedures are acceptable to most participants and observers — especially if the group includes individuals who may have little knowledge of (or perhaps some discomfort with) women’s spirituality and feminism.

In short, croning celebrations are as individual as celebrants. Every croning has its unique spin, and celebrations range from entirely secular events to deeply spiritual ones, from serious commemorations to uproariously funny ones, from celebrations rooted in religion to whimsical parties designed to thumb noses at ageism and sexism. The common threads of croning celebrations are the joy of sharing a meaningful occasion with friends; taking pride in years of experience; claiming for oneself the status and wisdom of the ancient crone; and bringing the crone archetype forward to inspire and guide contemporary women.

After her 1986 croning celebration, Jackie Gentry and her friend Faye Seifert collected descriptions of cronings around the United States. This article is based on information they gathered over a number of years. Gentry and Seifert have led many individual and group croning ceremonies.

The inaugural issue of the new magazine CRONE: Women Coming of Age includes a chapter on croning ritual by Bayla Bower. Also an internet search will yield a number of sites with additional information on croning rituals and celebrations.
A Place Known to All Women

by Mabtowin

There is a place known to most of us now as Mount Rushmore. To Natives of the Plains, it is the heart of Turtle Island (North America). It is said that if you were to fly over the Black Hills, you would see that the hills have the shape of the human heart. This place was the last stronghold of the Native people, and they fought desperately to save it from invasion.

In the early 1970s a group of about one hundred Native Americans decided to visit the top of Mount Rushmore to hold a healing ceremony for the mountain that had been carved and gouged into the faces of former presidents. On the assigned morning of the ceremony, we gathered at the bottom of the mountain and began our ascent to the top. As the group walked, we sang, chanted, and prayed. After several hours, we arrived at the top and formed the ancient sacred hoop of the nation. Young men made up the outer circle with the older men forming the second circle. The third circle was comprised of the young women and in the center were the grandmothers and children. This has always been the way of the sacred circle. The core of the nation rests with the grandmothers and the children. Without these two, a nation is believed not be able to continue.

Once we had established our place within the circle and had begun our ceremony, we were startled by the sudden arrival of a group of National Guardsmen. The soldier in charge went immediately to the elder men who were leading the ceremony and told them we had to disperse immediately. Words went back and forth among the soldiers and the elders, and tempers began to flare and voices were raised. An order was issued and the young soldiers encircled us with their shouldered guns. The young men on the outer circle shoved the soldiers back and chaos began to reign. Another order was issued and the young soldiers unharnessed their rifles from their shoulders and pointed them into the circle. More Natives began to push the outer limits of the circle and most there knew that soon one or more of us would be shot. In the span of a few moments we were standing as enemies of 100 years ago.

Just as shots were surely to be fired, without a word spoken between them, the grandmothers rose to their feet in unison. Each grandmother took the hand of a child near her and began to walk to the outer rim of the circle. Those who had been pushing and shouting at the soldiers moved and made a space for each pair as they fanned out to the edges of the circle. It would not do to knock a grandmother or child to the ground, so, out of respect, space was made for them. As the grandmother nearest to me came face to face with the young frightened soldier in her path, she reached out her hand and said, “Grandson, will you walk your grandmother down the mountain?” Each of the other grandmothers had said something similar to the soldier in her path and the top of the mountain was embraced in absolute silence. The soldiers hung their rifles on their shoulders again and offered their arms to the grandmothers to assist them down the mountain. As I looked at the young soldier in front of me, I noticed that he had tears rolling down his cheeks.

Without a word spoken between them, these wise old women defused a very dangerous situation and probably saved several lives that day. They needed no weapons to create a peaceful solution. Their power came from a place of love and a deep and ancient wisdom that is known to all women.
Standing Crones

by Mnimaka Brockett

On Saturday the 20th of September 2008, the third day of Cr ones Counsel XVI, grandmothers witnessed for peace and made a difference.

Most of the 190 crones who gathered for Cr ones Counsel in Seattle were aboard buses bound for an afternoon of sightseeing. Two score remained behind, a dozen perhaps in the open lounge area of the first floor atrium of our hotel. A few signs announced the presence of a psychic fair in a meeting room in the back corner of this open area.

A group of people with “Jesus” printed on their shirts, some carrying placards, entered and headed for the area of the psychic fair meeting room. Heads and eyes were raised at the beginning of their disturbance. One shouting man with bible in hand jumped onto a table in the open area, yelling bible verses. Continuing with his shouting, he jumped down to join the others in his group. At this point, a single, quiet, crone grandmother followed him, whispering into his ear as he continued shouting. “Jesus never raised his voice; Jesus never raised his voice.” The shouting man continued his attempt at joining the others who were also shouting, as they tried to force their way into the area of the psychic fair.

At that point the hotel manager went to inform them that the police had been called and asked the group to quiet down and leave. The group stood their ground and tension mounted as their confrontational behavior continued.

A group of Cr ones Counsel grandmothers moving as one, silently came together in a phalanx behind the manager, slowly pressing forward and moving the whole group of shouting people out of the building and through the side doors into the parking lot, from which they retreated in confusion.

When the police arrived, the shouters were gone and the manager told them that a silent group of grandmothers had simply backed the disturbance right out of the building.

The story spread like lightning among the returning crones, and all the women who had been part of that silent group were honored the next morning with a standing ovation by nearly two hundred cheering women.
The Flourishing ‘Tree’

Hold me, hold me,
Never let me go.
Hold me like a leaf
At the end of the branches.
And when I die
Let me fly. Let me fly
Through the air like a leaf that is falling.
— IZETTA SMITH

Can we hold our Crone Sisters as lightly, as lovingly as a leaf holds onto a branch? The Flourishing ‘Tree’ that is our Crones Counsel is losing some of our beloved ‘leaves,’ and we miss them; we will ever cherish them.

Her devoted love Robert was with her as she struggled to regain her health. As Amelia had taught me much about living, now she was my mentor in the process of dying with grace. As a private-duty RN, I have been with many dying patients, but I have never seen a woman who seemed to accept her Painful Path so matter-of-factly. She did not hide her chemotherapy-induced baldness, and she did not complain overtly. She came, finally, reluctantly, to an acceptance of the inevitable, and she was at peace at last.

Amelia loved the sea; she and Robert savored the salt air, the ebb and flow of the tides quite often when they lived in San Diego. The Pacific was a source of comfort and solace to her. I thought of her when I read these lines by Mary Sarton:

“I am not ready to die
But as I approach the inevitable
I turn my face toward the sea.
I shall go where tides replace time ...

Phyllis Clifton
October 2, 1929 – December 19, 2008
by Ann Emerson

Phyllis Clifton finally succumbed to Parkinson’s disease on December 19, 2008, at age 79. She was well-known at Counsel meetings for her friendliness, unique sense of humor, and the original stunts she put on at the follies, as well as her writings in Crone Chronicles. She is survived by her husband, two sons, and a daughter [who brought her to Crones Counsel this year].

Crone meant a great deal to Phyllis, it sparked her creativity and drew out her unique ideas. Her husband tells us she never did any writing before she joined the Crones. She is greatly missed by Crones of Greater Skagit Valley, which is putting together a Celebration of Her Life scrapbook of tributes, her writings, and pictures. We plan to put an article into CroneTimes or Crone magazine. If anyone would like to add a tribute, please send it to Ann Emerson, aemerson@wavecable.com or 6816 Salmon Beach Road, Anacortes, WA 98221.

Amelia Fairchild
August 24, 1943 – July 5, 2008
by Enid Williams

Amelia’s enthusiasm for, and dedication to Women’s Spirituality, as well as her love of her Crone Sisters will long be remembered. This Boston “transplant” Crone Elder remembers admiring Amelia from afar. Her engaging smile, her wonderful joy of living drew me to her. At last, to my delight — the occasion is lost in the mists of time — we became close friends. Enid, 20-plus years her senior, probably reminded Amelia of her childhood caretaker, Cuca, in Monterrey, Mexico. I learned a lot from Amelia about living life to the fullest, about the possibilities of friendship, about being kind-hearted and generous.

Last autumn, as the leaves were falling, Amelia became seriously ill with a devastating form of cancer. Month after month,