CRONES COUNSEL
Celebrating Wise Women

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 1
FEBRUARY 2015

TEACHER, ROLE MODEL, FRIEND, AND MENTOR

Tribute to Honored Elder Ramona Adams
by Susan Ann Stauffer, Counsel Mother

“Do not grow old, no matter how long you live.
Never cease to stand like curious children
Before the great mystery into which we are born.”

—ALBERT EINSTEIN (sent by Dottie White)

I am, perhaps, not the best woman to write a tribute to Ramona. There are women, maybe some of you, who may have known her better or known her longer, but I do have some insight into her life, her thoughts, her feelings, her values and her beliefs, her contribution to the world and the legacy she leaves behind her. I say that because I knew of her involvement with Crones Counsel from day one. I traveled with Ramona to and from Crones Counsel for, I think if I remember correctly, for 18 of our 22 years. Sitting side by side with her, either in a plane or in a car, provided many hours of deep and profound conversation. I sat with her over lunch dozens of times and I sat in her living room many other dozens of times.

I first experienced Ramona at A Women’s Conference at the University of Utah in the ‘80s. She was teaching a workshop with her sister Au-Deane Cowley; they were both Ph.D. professors in the College of Social Work. The topic of their presentation was “Letting Go.” I was probably 35 years old, rather dumb and stupid but incredibly curious and willing to learn. Ramona was a robust woman then, powerful, tactful, total-ly mesmerizing. She utilized Kenny Rogers’ famous song The Gambler, the chorus of which advises: “Know when to hold ‘em, know when to fold ‘em, know when to walk away, and know when to run.” I still have the notes to that workshop. I was simply blown away. I pulled those notes from my archives for years and re-read them, mining the wisdom of her words and thoughts. (She had a published book with the same title.) I have never forgotten that workshop. So many times I have made decisions based on her insights. Still to this very day. Should I run? Should I walk? Should I stay? Should I lie down?

I did not meet her personally until Crones Counsel I. By then, I knew who she was and how influential she was in academia, University Administration, and in the community. It was Ramona Adams who took the position of Vice-President of Student Affairs for the University only on the condition that she be allowed to institute a Women’s Center at the University. (There were only two other such institutions in the United States at that time.) Her choice for the Director of the Women’s Center was Shauna Adix, one of our Founding Mothers. Together those two women changed the culture of the university for women. They brought hundreds of non-traditional (and traditional) women back to school and mentored them through Bachelor’s degrees, then Master’s degrees, then Ph.D.’s, and if that weren’t enough, pointed them in a direction in which they could obtain professional careers. Amazing. Amazing women. The two of them together were nothing short of formidable and visionary. I know because I was a recipient of the culture they created at the university.

When I graduated with my Master’s degree and moved to Hawaii, Ramona wrote a letter of recommendation for me for

TRIBUTE TO RAMONA ADAMS, continued on Page 2
TRIBUTE TO RAMONA ADAMS, con’t. from Page 1

the position of Director of Social Services in a 288-bed skilled nursing facility. The CEO who hired me said: “If you are half as good as this woman says you are, that will be good enough.” I still have that letter safely in my archives as well.

I watched Ramona the first few years of Counsel. She and Shauna were best friends. Shauna had amazing charisma. Shauna would stand in front of a group and, within minutes, she had you in the palm of her hand. Ramona? She was so strong in herself that she needed no stage. As I saw it, she was the wind beneath Shauna’s wings. I think Shauna might agree:

Oh, oh, oh, oh.

It must have been cold there in my shadow
To never have sunlight on your face
You were content to let me shine, that’s your way
You always walked a step behind

So I was the one with all the glory
While you were the one with all the strength
A beautiful face without a name for so long
A beautiful smile to hide the pain

Did you ever know that you’re my hero
And everything I would like to be?
I can fly higher than an eagle
For you are the wind beneath my wings

It might have appeared to go unnoticed
But I’ve got it all here in my heart
I want you to know, I know the truth, of course
I know it
I would be nothing without you

Did you ever know that you’re my hero?
You’re everything I wish I could be
I could fly higher than an eagle
For you . . .

—BETTE MIDLER

I know that Ramona stood one day on Shauna’s doorstep when Shauna was working on her dissertation and not progressing at the tempo needed. Ramona sent Shauna to the writing desk and helped with the family duties until Shauna completed her dissertation.

I know that Ramona Adams completed her own Ph.D. by the dark of many nights after long days with eight children. I know that Ramona was a family woman, an active member of her church community, a very good and practical mother, a loving grandmother, great grandmother, sister, friend, and a stellar academic and administrator. There were many Christmases at Ramona’s home when her family, her sisters, their husbands and myriad numbers of friends and professional women would gather to sing Christmas carols and eat Ramona’s famous chocolate chip cookies. It was always glorious. She was as good a homemaker as she was an academic.

Ramona was a steadfast feminist but a quiet one. She fought always for women’s rights, the ERA, women’s education, childcare, reproductive rights, all of it. All of it. Ramona had a sense of humor bar none. She sat in a restaurant after the Boise Crones Counsel with four of us and told jokes for three hours. I could not believe it! My stomach ached for days after that; she was absolutely hysterical.

Ramona was a consummate storyteller. She knew how to tell a story. Many, many a night I sat around a fire at Counsel listening to her talk. She had her favorite stories and I got to hear many of them many, many times. That repetition told me what was important to Ramona, how she would want to be remembered, what she knew and what she felt about many things. Ramona was a woman of integrity; she wished harm to none. Her desire was to have a world where everyone “simply behaved.” She thought we were all smart enough to do that. She thought we were all smart enough and talented enough to get whatever needed to be done done. She trusted it would get done and so, most often, it did.

Her friendship, her mentorship, her support, and her example have been one of the greatest gifts of my life. I know I would not be the woman that I am today if my path had not crossed with Ramona’s. I loved traveling with her; she was the best traveling companion I have ever had. I loved being arm in arm with her as we walked wherever it was we were going. I loved opening her door for her, helping her with her coat, hugging her hello and hugging her good-bye every time I saw her. It is because of Ramona Adams that I am living in St. George, Utah. She kept after me until she got me here and, again, it has been a boon for me. This is a perfect place for me. My gifts are appreciated here and, well, as a result, I was able to spend many hours with her as she continued through her aging journey.

TRIBUTE TO RAMONA ADAMS, continued on Page 3
THAT CURIOUS CRONE
by Camille Chitolie (first-time attendee)

How could I have known, my meeting this wonderful lady, Helen, and my sister Cynthia’s spur-of-the-moment decision would be the “force,” guiding me to Crones Counsel.

I expected a conference typical of the many I have attended during my life; but my, what a surprise! Throughout the conference I felt comfortable, I belonged. I observed unconditional support and acceptance; I walked on air, my feet didn’t touch the ground, or so it seemed. To me, each individual radiated love and understanding, creating a spiritual environment that was uplifting and enduring.

Everything touched me. I enjoyed the songs, the follies, the outdoor ceremony at Snow Canyon, the workshops I participated in, the art, the food, the very comedic moments, and the participants—Maidens, Matrons, Crones. Everything felt right.

Thanks to Helen for sharing her plans and Cynthia for that snap decision; and thank you Crones Counsel participants for the rich, spiritual encounter at my first Crones conference. Big hearts, big dreams; I am honoured to have been part of the conference. Still smiling, and still walking on air.

****

CONTRIBUTE TO QUEST FOR LEARNING?
by Cynthia Daniel (first-time attendee)

It was June 2013 when my sister Camille (who lives in Saskatchewan, Canada) asked me during our monthly conversations if I had heard of Crones Counsel. She told me that her friend Helen had emailed her that she was attending one in Utah in November and that she (Camille) wanted to attend. I hesitantly said, “Carm, I think this will be older Caucasian women from the Midwest and I’m not sure that this conference would contribute to my own quest for learning.” Carmie said, “Go online and read about it; I think you will like it.” I did go online, liked it and I negotiated with my sister that I would go if she went to Las Vegas with me. She agreed and we booked the hotels and flights immediately.

Upon arrival at Best Western in Utah, I was awestruck by the warmth of the staff at the hotel, and the unconditional love, hugs and smiles from conference participants. I tried to reflect in the memories of my lifetime to when I felt such peace, love and joy within my spirit. I felt like an unborn child nestling in the womb of my mother, except that there were many mothers. What struck me was the loving and accepting environment of the conference.

I loved this woman deeply and dearly. She will live in my heart. There will never be a Counsel in which her spirit is not within me. In fact, I imagine that both she and Shauna will be sitting in their comfortable chairs, wrapped in the beautiful knitted afghans created with their own hands, sipping strawberry lemonades, watching the goings-on of every Counsel (just like they watched football and basketball) and smiling endearingly on all of us.

Ramona Adams attended every Crones Counsel gathering bringing her warmth, humor, and extraordinary wisdom. She was instrumental in visioning Crones Counsel, being one of the five women who donated the start-up money for Crones Counsel I. She served as a Board Member for many years. She supported Crones Counsel financially, emotionally, and physically by the grace of her exquisite spirit. Every woman who had the chance to speak to her was edified and uplifted and her gifts will always be a part of our herstory.
me the most is that I felt incredibly vulnerable when one participant briefly shared her painful story; I cried a river of emotions as I released the pain of my mother and three sisters, which had occurred at my birth.

The conference at times was hilariously funny, intellectually, a reinforcement of the value I had placed in my elders and a pure expression of unconditional love. The conference ended on my birthday. On that last day—the circle of love and dance filled my spirit with hope. My spirit soars to new heights and I will cherish November 2014 forever.

****

SIMPLY LUMINOUS!
By Maggie Fenton

The first Crones Counsel I attended was in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1998 and I was not yet a Crone. I had come to look … to listen … to learn. And I did. This has continued at every Counsel I’ve attended, and while each has had its own unique lessons for me, this one, with its theme of Luminosity was particularly potent. Luminous is the Crone—radiant, reflecting the light of their years.

I’ve not been able to take the mantle of “Crone” yet—not because I have issues, as some do, with the term or that I’m in a state of denial about aging—my body won’t let me forget that! But somehow, it has seemed irreverent to me to adopt that honorific when I’ve witnessed so many of my wise, wise elders over the years that seemed to have had that special luminous quality that goes with “Crone.”

The first one in which I recognized this quality was Shauna [Adix] at that conference in 1998. Even though she was very ill, she glowed when wheeled into that gathering of women. Over the years, I’ve recognized that Crone light in others—Ramona, Betty, Vita, Jackie—the list is long of those who are no longer with us physically but whose light continues to shine on us.

This year, I saw so many lights shining! During the Snow Canyon “Honoring the Elders” ceremony, I’ll bet you could see the light from outer space! The laughter, the joy, the wisdom and the light filled that canyon.

So thank you, Elders … and Dreamers … and Organizers … and Sisters. Because of you, I’m well on the path to being Crone!

CRONE TIMES is the official newsletter for Crones Counsel and is published twice a year, in January or February and July. When you attend a gathering, you will receive the next two issues (or one year’s worth). It is also on our website: www.cronescounsel.org

Editor/Designer: Marta Quest  Editor/Reporter: Kianna Bader
Contributors (this issue): Susan Ann Stauffer, Camille Chitolie, Cynthia Daniel, Maggie Fenton, Patricia Weller, Ann Kreilkamp, Kaye Chatterton, Kathy Puffer, Kianna Bader, Meg Randle, Carol Friedrich, Simone LaDrumma

THANK YOU!
I had a massive heart attack, during which I died four times. The heart surgeon was quite surprised I survived and justifiably proud that my EKG’s recorded a healthy “normal” heart. Lesson learned, if you die, do it on the operating table. This has been far more difficult for me to relate than I expected. I have never been one to relish hearing the traumatic health stories of others, and can’t help but feel like I am whining. My death experience held no radiant light-filled tunnels or mystical answers. The feeling I did experience has removed any fear of dying that might linger from my childhood-imposed beliefs, and it remains the most vivid memory. I will certainly not bore you with the next month, which held an abundance of whining, moaning, bitching, and depression. I can only feel enormous gratitude that my knee was miraculously replaced amid the chaos, my partner was so loving and supportive and I emerged with a healthy heart, two fully functional pain-free legs (yes, two, as Medicare allowed for my first new prosthesis in thirty years). Oh my, how science has evolved!

I find it difficult to believe that having experienced all of this, I managed to avoid the significance of this life-altering event until I found myself in St. George standing here gazing at the traces of these wonderful Crones. Some I had never known, others I had touched briefly, still others had impacted my life enormously. My eyes lingered on pictures and talismans that embodied these brilliant women in the hearts of their friends. Standing there, it finally registered—how many miracles had occurred in order for me to have the blessing of attending XXII in this body. Had even one thing gone differently, I would only be here as a memory in this chair. A thousand things seemed to collide in my brain, memories suppressed, words left unsaid, deeds undone, moments squandered—even that day—the enormous gift I had been given. Had I learned anything? How could I express my gratitude? Deserve this wonderful gift? The explosion of thoughts and emotions left the Ker-POW of the defibrillator in the dust.

I wish I could finish this by sharing all the radical changes of lifestyle and behavior that accompanied this gift. There are changes, there will be more. Some days I am overwhelmed with gratitude; other days I am overwhelmed by the enormity of things I wish to change after having this awakening … or should I call it a comeuppance?
I write this on day four of the 22nd nomadic annual five-day event called **Crones Counsel**, this year held in St. George, Utah, where 136 women, most of them self-identified as either crones, cronettes, or crones-in-training, plus five or six daughters of crones, one 35-year-old single mother of twins who needs mothering from us, and at least 15 honored elders in their 80s and 90s, including one sprite who is probably everybody’s absolute favorite, Enid, almost 92, sitting here, in her usual pose of astonishment, after our Ceremony at Snow Canyon yesterday, with Rita, who routinely tells the best crone stories I’ve ever ever heard, on her left.

Enid will be conducting our annual Crone Follies tonight, when all sorts of acts, both individual and group, will have us in stitches and probably wetting our old lady pants. One of the characteristics that I’ve noticed about the frequency field of “Crone” is a certain hilarious ribald intensity, fully in evidence around here. For example, yesterday, at the crone story time—normally sacred, or sorrowful, or vulnerable, or deeply, personally meaningful in some other way, the usual tone of the 90-minute session with which we start each morning, listening to each other’s stories of loss and love and miracle. That is, until yesterday morning, when one woman sitting next to me, one of the honored elders in their 80s and 90s we were set to honor, wore a cap that flashes in the light. “Yes, it has lots of bling,” she responded matter-of-factly, when I admired it.

Over and over again, startled by women who look a certain way on the outside, and then, I discover, are outrageously individual on the inside. This is always true about **Crones Counsel**, always true of women who used to say they are “claiming Crone” and are now, as Susan Ann, the current “Crone Mother” (i.e., President of the **Crones Counsel** board) notes, we are “being Crone.” Yes. After 22 years. It’s time.

Having not attended for three or four years, I was astounded at how ripe is now this gathering that I “cofounded,” which means, in this case, that I, the publisher of **Crone Chronicles** (1989–2001), in 1992 invited Shauna Adix, founder of one of the first women centers in the country at the University of Utah, to take on the job of creating a gathering of and for older women who wanted to investigate the meaning of the archetype Crone and set its unique tone. She gathered five of her friends around a round table and together they called the first **Crones Counsel** into manifestation, where I lived, in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. All I had to do was find and work with the hotel venue, which I did.

Apparently the seed that was planted in late 1993 put down roots and sprouted, and is now flourishing. Because 22 years later, it is strong and vibrant, having integrated its own shadow material over the years. The tone of sacred intent, heart-shared vulnerability, utter honesty, and deeply held values of trust, kindness, love, and truth, still prevail.
 Thousands of women have been impacted over the years, encouraging them to not only value this stage of life in a culture that worships youth, but to use their unique gifts and experience to benefit the world around them.

At the ceremony yesterday, first we bowed to the four directions, plus Mother Earth and Father Sky.

Then began the actual ceremony where we honored each of the ages, women from various decades of life coming to the center to pour their sand into a big bowl, beginning with the younger ones and ending with the elders, each of whom got up and took the microphone to tell us something that she has learned from her long experience in life.

Here’s our eldest elder [Alice Yee], 95 years old, tall, straight, and serene in her gratitude and honoring of life. A woman sitting next to me, who knows her at home, whispered, “She just recently began to age.”

After they had all finished, we stood before them to energize them with our love.

Kaye, who had been one of the original five women at the round table in Salt Lake City 22 years ago, then got up to speak about Crone. What is Crone, when does one become crone, the questions that many women ask. She went through several ways of looking at Crone: the third cycle of Saturn, menopause, other developmental markers, and ended up with seeing crone as a process: we are always coming into Crone, never finished. She is larger than any of our conceptions of her, and embodying her is both gift and challenge.

Later, at our dinner that night, I happened to be sitting at the same table with Kaye, I whispered in her ear my favorite definition of Crone, “She who eats her own shadow,” i.e., she who takes back her projections each time she finds them, she who integrates all the stuff that she doesn’t like about herself, over and over again, to become whole. You might call this “individuation,” the Jungian interpretation of Crone.

The afternoon ceremony ended with a beautiful song that I can no longer remember the name of, one of many sung with and to each other during these four days. Here’s Joan, my traveling sister, helping to bring the song to a close.

Afterwards, we all hobnobbed some more until carpooling in the “funeral procession” back to the Abbey Inn/Best Western Hotel.

Dorothy from Massachusetts, with whom I talked about her practice, as an ordained minister, of holding crone ceremonies for women at the point where they have completed their 13th Moon without bleeding (one definition of the actual end of menopause), wanted her picture taken with me. Okay.

Two elder crones talk—the one on the left came to my workshop this afternoon in the same kind of outfit that she wears here. I swear, she looks like a Republican! But you wouldn’t believe what comes out of this wonderful woman’s mouth. Having grown up Mormon, she calls herself and her husband, “missionaries, for universal values.” Amazing.

Well, I’d better wrap this up so I won’t be late for the Crone Follies. Ah. One more picture, of Patricia, who decided to get tattoos of falling leaves on her 75th birthday in honor of this part of her life. Once again, amazing.
Thoughts on Claiming Crone

by Kaye Chatterton

Becoming Crone is a process. As a living complex system of mental, emotional, and physical elements coming into the last phase of life has for me, there are levels of unfolding. I present a gentle framework here for discovering Crone.

No one can anoint, appoint, or crown you Crone. It is something you must claim. In ancient times the second return of Saturn (age 56) in your natal astrological chart deemed you Crone. In current times, as women live much longer, the ramifications of extended life and cultural values make becoming Crone a bit more complicated. Chronological age still is our primary marker, but health, work, family, finances, resources all have implications.

Chronological age by itself does not ensure wisdom and maturity. There are older women who are stuck in past resentments, bitter experiences of unmet expectations. Others continue in self-defeating behaviors, feel martyred or like victims. Some have never broken out of old patterns to speak their truth, to claim their personal power. So what is the "real" process of becoming Crone in our current times?

“EGO TO ESSENCE”

A framework for consideration is “Ego to Essence.” The physical aging process marches on; time cannot be stopped by exercise, cosmetics or body-shape wear, although those efforts help momentarily. It appears to me there are progressive levels that we move through in our transformation to actually claiming Crone.

To illustrate my thinking, let’s suppose Level 1 is our post-menopausal arrival. At this phase we experience the empty nest, consideration for retirement planning, and the possibilities of life beyond work for us and our partners. This is a major shift that has huge financial implications, as well as social and emotional impact. This stage is one we are conscious of as we begin moving out of employment settings for us and partners. Conscious or not, there is a struggle to make these transitions.

Level 2 seems to be another task that may or may not be, as much in our conscious awareness. For me, the confrontation of the loss of my youth and the spoken and unspoken cultural implications that I experience has been huge. We live in a youth-oriented society and the over-emphasis on lithe beauty and flowing hair runs counter to my thickening waist and thinning tresses. The cosmetic industry and ready plastic surgery to sustain the illusion of youth has a siren call. While I want to continue to “look my best,” at what point should I give up coloring my hair?

Wrestling with the ego around unsustainable expectations of physical appearance can take a lot of energy and create a certain hidden anxiety. Does my value as a woman also diminish and do I diminish physically? Coupled with the loss of youth, there is a creeping reality that my time on earth is finite. I am aware that I am running out of time; unfulfilled hopes and dreams will surely not ever happen at this point. Should I resign myself to not being able to fulfill those expectations? What would give my life purpose and meaning in the context I now experience?

Level 3 is the realization that we are not our bodies or our many labels, but essence, which is the real me. We begin to detach from our old views of self. What do I as essence know and understand at this junction in my life? Beyond my body, ego and reflected self-image from society, what is the very essence of me? I consider what I know to be true, most important, what really matters. I sense me as essence, is what I have always been and perhaps, always will be.

At Level 4, I claim the wisdom of my life experience as the Crone Mantel. With thoughtful consideration I explore my legacy and how I can take daily actions small or large, to explore and involve myself in thoughts, actions, and the work of Crone, to assist others on the path. I recognize the impermanence of all living things. I face the dark Crone and the specter of death.

Level 5 is the full identification of self as Essence: I AM CRONE. I hold the knowledge of the gift of life in all of its ramifications. I face the unknown with peace and curiosity. I unburden unfinished business to become more transparent and pure light to enable me to make the transition and pass well. I am Luminous with age. I shift from light bearer (love and wisdom) to light giver (love and compassion) to pure LOVE and Light, a compass, a sentinel who leads the way.

For me, these arbitrary levels I have outlined are permeable and merge into each other. I may think that I have put Level 1 to rest and then one day I see myself in the mirror and for a time I revert back to those feelings of mourning the loss of my youth. I may have progressed through other stages but find myself just having experienced a friend or partner die. I feel fear and uncertainty. What I am saying is that we
never arrive and check the levels off our list. There is always movement up and down, across the process. I regress, fall into old patterns with family because of some behavior that hooked me. It is the awareness of self and the tasks of claiming Crone that informs me to be kind to myself and others. I observe myself and know essence and let go of old ego stuff and merge again into higher levels of being Crone.

The “Call of the Crone” is a call to introspection and life review. The Call of the Crone is to the long view of our life but even the longer view of historical patterns and gifts of cultures and legacies of those who came before. The Call is to prepare for leaving the physical body that no longer serves you, and to let go of personal identity into the essence of you, to return to the whole as you perceive it.

What is Crone Wisdom? It is not knowing the right answers ... but knowing the right questions.

How do I die well? What would that look like for me? Perhaps more important is, how do I live fully in the joy of the present moment? How can I live in awareness and aliveness now? How can I connect to my essence: the real me? How can I live with sustained gratitude and appreciation? How can I support and share love with all my relations? How can I share the luminous light that is me?

Becoming an Artisan

By Kathy Puffer

“What are you going to do when you retire?” The last time I had heard a question like that it was, “What are you going to be when you grow up?” and my reaction was pretty much the same: Give me a break. I’m working on it.

In 2001, I attended my first Crones gathering, which shocks me now. I had no idea our history together went so far back. It was at the excessive urging of my friend and drumming master, Janet Morrissey, who had also encouraged me, repeatedly, to retire that year.

That Crones gathering gave me my first Wise Woman gift, a goal to reach in anticipation of retirement: vending my art work. I felt there was a supportive environment of professional vendors and beginners/amateurs who would give me a chance to see what it would be like to sell something I had made.

So I spent a year getting my “artcraft” completed, deciding how to display it, designing flyers, learning how to price items, and I sent in my application for Asilomar 2002. My daughter, my greatest supporter, came to help, thank goodness. Just because I enjoyed making art didn’t necessarily mean I enjoyed sitting at a table feeling very vulnerable while women looked at what I had accomplished.

It was a wonderful affirmation. I found my greatest pleasure wasn’t in selling my work: it was in talking with women who appreciated it and shared their own dreams and ideas.

From there I returned in 2004 to Las Vegas, in 2005 to San Diego and in 2008, to Seattle. Yes, in Seattle I was one of those witnesses who saw the power of women joining together to silently attest to the right of [how ironic] female vendors to sell their handcrafts.

Albuquerque, in 2010, home of my daughter and home of Wiminfest where I vended for several years, again thanks to the push I had gotten from Crones. Today I want to acknowledge Marta Quest, who made sure new vendors got to those workshops and story times; and I want to send a special thank you to Patricia Weller, who always has been generous in sharing her experience as a professional vendor.

THE FIRST POETRY EVENT AT CC

Crone Poets Rising

by Kianna Bader

Ah, yes—and the crone poets did rise to the occasion—25 of them at St. George. Our first poetry event at Crones Counsel was so successful, we plan to do it again next year.

After last year’s Counsel, some of us got together and talked about separating poetry from the Follies. It no longer seemed to fit as more and more poets were coming onto the scene. Women’s Wisdom coming to the fore ...

Susan Ann asked the board and they thought it was a good idea. Claudia agreed to help and she coordinated with Susan Ann. With all that support, we were able to do it.

After the reading, many women asked for copies of the poems. This led Pat Hanson to think about doing an anthology, which could be sold to benefit Crones Counsel. The board is considering this proposal.
Bee Keeping
By Meg Randle

LAST NIGHT AS I WAS SLEEPING
by Antonio Machado, translated by Robert Bly
. . . Last night as I was sleeping,
I dreamt—marvelous error!—
that I had a beehive
here inside my heart.

And the golden bees were making
white combs and sweet honey
from my old failures...

This poem was given to me at the beginning of my new adventure. Below are some thoughts on the teachings from these golden honeybees.

Last April, I was gifted with an opportunity to bring a new world into my postage-sized city dwelling and receive an established beehive alongside an experienced beekeeper and his hive. He needed a place for his hive. I apparently needed an adventure. Mustering a bit of courage and a couple of neighbors to share in this exciting and uncertain project, I am sure I heard a voice say: Be Curious.

Locating the proper attire and supplies was easier than I expected at the local IFA (International Farmer’s Association) where urban and country intersect. The sights and smells and sounds were very rewarding to this citified gal. I attended Apiary Classes for bee-keeping instructions, and the classes were well attended by a mix of people—none of whom I had known before. We were all eager and attracted to sharing: Be Open.

We eagerly prepared boxes for our bees. Getting the white boxes with their small openings mounted on cinder blocks, we had to keep them off the ground and slightly tilted promoting drainage of any moisture. Apparently a wet or cold bee is not a happy or live bee! My son dubbed our three-hive-tall structure the “Leaning Tower of Bee-za.”

Early one cool April day, the sleepy bees nestled inside a small box were delivered. As the sun warmed the day, bees came out and neighbors gathered with coffee and rolls in hand to see the bees’ orienting flights around their new home. Since they had nothing to guard or protect, the bees golden flight patterns widened along with their increasing whirring noise. Childlike and fearless, we walked among them while no stinging occurred: Be Playful.

As the summer season came on, the tasks of tending and rearranging frames inside the hives required our inspections every few weeks. If too early on cool mornings, the bees were inside and did not appreciate being disturbed. Later in the day, donned all in white bee suits and netting, though stuffy, we were provided a little more protection as we entered their space. Opening the lid while wearing a hooded bee jacket can spare one the embarrassment of explaining a swollen nose. Stepping on a bee’s stinger barefoot was a sharp reminder that shoes are required as some bees hover on the ground. Wearing dark clothes and coming at the hive from the front is known to be a threat to set off the bee alarm. We encouraged bright colors or had spare white shirts for those watching. As one young neighbor said, “Dress like a flower, not a bear.” We quickly learned the need for curiosity to be balanced with caution: Be Careful.

We saw our neighbors’ gardens flourish as they never had before, and we connected their abundance to
the efforts of our pollinating bees. We understood the connection to more tomatoes and squashes on vines and more apricots, apples and pears on trees. So many, that we quickly realized we would have to gather and work all together in order to stay ahead. Processing, canning and sharing of the bounty was big industry on our little street. We enjoyed the fruits of our labor as we tasted all the dried slices, the leather, puree, ice cream and fruit crisp from my very resourceful co-beekeepers. I even mailed tastings of our neighborhood to family and friends. Clearly this adventure had benefits: Be Communal.

At the end of summer, the days came for harvesting surplus honey. This complex assessment and multi-step process took many hours. We had to ensure there was enough pollen for the queen and the brood (future bee babies); there had to be enough nectar and honey to get this hive through the winter. We determined which would be the winter-over frames needing to hold as much as 50–60 pounds of honey. Then, like bandits, we packed up the extra frames, leaving behind confused and even agitated bees.

Down the street at our “harvesting house,” we fortunately had a closed-up, fire-warmed, and tarp-covered-everything man-cave: now the honey cave. Our next steps were the sticky experimenting and extracting. We uncapped the honey-filled frames by cutting with a hot knife and then hand-spinning the frames in our honeycomb spinner. Good music, a timeout couch and stocked refrigerator added to the comforts of sharing the commitment to the bees these last months. Ten hours later, we emerged from the harvesting house to gather for a street-wide spontaneous and well-earned garden potluck. We ate and drank and relished heartily: Be Grateful.

The next morning, we returned to open the honeygate on the spinner and let our golden flow of community “failures and successes” drip through the strainer into jars. Many jars! What an immediate sense of fulfillment. In every sun-filled jar, we could see and taste the unique flavor of local nectar from the bees’ two-mile radius of our diverse flora. Acknowledging the influence and interdependence we had on each other, we agreed to share this delicious honey with our cohesive community. We distributed little honey jars with a note of appreciation for support, an article on choosing bee friendly flowers to plant and non-toxic weed killer alternative. We enjoyed the smiles and words of gratitude from our neighbors.

We are beginning to recognize the need for sustainable beekeeping, but more importantly, planting a healthy habitat to allow bees to forage. We must understand the complexities of spraying “neonic” chemical pesticides that are weakening the bees’ immune systems and further threaten bee colony collapse. A happy bee needs a healthy earth and so do we. The interdependence of our pollinated food supply and each other was fully experienced and shared with our hives this year. This microcosm is an example of our larger world in which we all benefit for our work and play together and sharing of harvest. The bees unquestionably taught us a lot with a lot more to learn and enjoy: Be Mindful.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR LIFE …

Honored Elder
Marjorie Speece

Submitted by Carol Friedrich

Marjorie Speece, the mother of Walta Ruff and Marji Nash, passed away January 6, 2015, at the age of 102. She was one of our Honored Elders for ten Crones Counsels (1996–2006), the oldest at many of them. Both daughters enjoyed sharing those times with her.

Marjorie was born at home on April 14, 1912, in Union, Nebraska. She attended a teacher’s preparatory college majoring in elementary and music education in Nebraska and, later, completed her BA in education at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley. She had met and married her husband, Walter Speece, in Nebraska. Her earliest teaching positions were in one-room rural schools in eastern Nebraska, where one of her responsibilities was to arrive in advance of students to start the coal-burning stoves. Marjorie followed her husband in his career as a school administrator to several Nebraska towns. Both daughters were born in Nebraska.

In 1951, the family moved to Loveland, Colorado, where Marjorie continued her teaching career.

Marjorie loved music throughout her life, and was often at the keyboard for school and church programs, for community sing-a-longs, for choir rehearsals and services at her church, and for vocal and instrumental recitals. As a teenager, she had played accompaniment for silent movies. Years later she spent a summer playing thematic background for some melodramas, and as a thirteen-year resident of her care facility, she accompanied their choir until several years ago. We fondly remember times Marjorie played the piano at the Follies at some Crones Counsels, and for her beautiful, smiling face at the Honoring of the Elders.

A MIND OF ITS OWN

By Simone LaDrumma

My drum LEAPS for you!
Like a dog who’s been waiting all day to go out and then you put its leash on and before you can do any more, panting and grinning, straining at its bonds, it DRAGS you toward the door!

My drum is like a horse for you!
I want it to trot but it wants to FLY, I want it to canter, but it rears up and whinnies, threatens to break down the barriers, bust through the fence, uh-oh, we’re heading for the gate … my drum will not wait

We’re in Temple. I say to my drum, Behave yourself!
But my drum is listening to some other voice, and I can only go along with this louder song that tells my drum, Rejoice! REJOICE!