

Circle of Grandmothers

Volume 13

Number 4

December 2007

The Age Of The Grandmothers

by Lotus Linton

“When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.” This beautiful Hopi prophecy stirred my heart when I first heard it, as I sat among the women of the Tucson Grandmothers’ Council. Being a new grandmother and having written the Grandmothers’ Manifesto not long after the events of 9-11, I knew that something was in the air, something deeply profound was blooming within me and perhaps others. Since that event two years ago, my life has taken several serendipitous turns to discover grandmothers everywhere who are hearing the same clarion call of the ancient prophecies and stepping up to fulfill them. It is time.

The wave that we ride is the emergence of the “grandmother archetype” that is remembered in the ancient stories...a powerful metaphor, a truly sacred symbol that arises now from the depths of the psyche of the individual and of society. It is being activated and embodied by circles of elder women on many fronts, in many locales, and it holds the seeds of an entirely new consciousness that stands in stark contrast to the prevailing paradigms of our current situation as a human family. I like to call this the Age of the Grandmothers.

My journey into this archetype began with the Tucson Grandmothers’ Council at Rex Ranch in 2005, on the night of our Full Moon ceremony led by Lorraine. There, in our semicircle of beautiful elder women, we sang to the moon. We sang to the waters of the Earth as we collected the water samples we had each brought from our respective locales into one large bowl, praying for water’s restoration everywhere. Our ceremony touched me deeply.

Later that night, in my own quarters, I was not able to sleep, stimulated as I was by the events of the evening. Around midnight I was compelled by some inner dictate to step out in my nightgown and go to the grassy grounds where the ceremony had been held. The full moon was now directly overhead and I stood on the ceremonial site, basking in its light for several long

moments. I found myself saying, “Grandmother Spirits, I dedicate this life of mine to the service of your purpose.” I had little idea who the grandmother spirits were, yet I knew I belonged to them. The next morning, I walked upon the knoll above the ranch and rededicated myself to these unseen Grandmothers. A series of synchronous events followed.

First I was given an intuitive reading by my friend, Jeni, who makes her living using her exceptional insight, and she announced that I had a bevy of grandmother spirits just hovering around me, awaiting deeper connection. Jeni knew nothing of my previous midnight rendezvous with the grandmother spirits in Tucson.

Then the beautiful book, *A Call to Power: When the Grandmothers Speak*, came into my hands. It was written by Sharon McErlane, a woman who had also been “visited” by the Great Council of Grandmothers. The message of the Grandmothers within the book is breathtaking in its simplicity and beauty, and gives great reason to hope for a better future for our children and grandchildren. They told Sharon that the source of our planetary trauma and spoliation is the depletion of the power of Yin and it is up to women, first, to bring the Earth back into balance. To serve this purpose, according to the Grandmothers’ guidance, Sharon offers Empowerment Ceremonies for women who then, in turn, offer them to others. These circles have burgeoned to become international in scope. I was so

touched by this profoundly simple ceremony that I committed to offering it in my own garden for others on a monthly basis, and I have traveled to Sharon’s home in Laguna Beach to be with gentle warm women from around the country and other parts of the world who are doing the same.

In the meantime, I enrolled in a ministerial training program through the Center for Sacred Studies that was predominantly offered on-line, which was something I could afford both time and money for. I loved the program’s global spiritual perspective with emphasis on indigenous teachings. But, to my surprise, *after* enrolling, I discovered that monthly tutors for this program were the 13 Indigenous Grandmothers from several continents who have been meeting twice a year for the last four years! Jyoti, a lovely, wise, and dedicated spiritual teacher of Cherokee descent, was not only the coordinator for my ministerial program, but she has been the main organizer for the Indigenous Grandmothers’ events!

This group of thirteen grandmothers is now traveling the world and speaking on globally televised programs with their messages of love and healing. Interestingly, several of them speak of the prophecies of their own cultures which are similar to the Hopi prophecy. It is stated in numerous versions, such as: “When the Grandmothers from the four directions speak, a new time is coming.” One of the members of this council, Grandmother Rita Pitka Blumenstein is from the Yupik people of the Arctic Circle. When she was nine years old, her great-grandmother gave her thirteen stones and thirteen eagle feathers to pass out one day at the Grandmothers’ Council she had seen in her visions. These, of course, were distributed, tearfully, to the council of thirteen at their first meeting in upstate New York.

The beautiful thing is that as the Grandmothers are now speaking, the world is ready to listen. Says Jyoti of these thirteen amazing personages:

Age of GMs cont. on page 2



When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

"The wisdom of these women and the power they walk with in such humble ways brings a presence, brings such hope into the heart of each and every one of us... So much of the feedback I've been given is that they help us recognize that there is a deep need for the grandmother in each one of us personally. There is this deep place of nourishment that the Grandmothers open in us and something very personal and very intimate is invoked."

In October of this year I drove to Ashland to interview Sharon Mehdi (another Sharon), a soft-spoken, humorous and delightful woman, about her book, *The Great Silent Grandmother Gathering*. We spent a lovely afternoon together talking about her book's miraculous success. The story is about two grandmothers who stood silently in the park for peace and attracted such attention that eventually all the women in town joined them. Sharon intended this book for her first grandchild but it spread like wildfire through her friends who loved it, through her hometown, and then through the country, as it was being picked up by Penguin publishing company to become a national best-seller. Sharon told me that a medicine man on Mt. Shasta had told her ten years ago that it will be the women who will change the world. She took the message to heart. "As soon as enough people want peace, we will have peace," Sharon said to me. "And it's gonna be the women."

I marvel at the perfect dovetailing of all these events and conditions of my life into a new gestalt of devotion and direction. The Age of the Grandmothers is upon us. We are a part of it. I realize I must have been "born to be a Grandmother" and the truth of that statement grows more obvious each day.

What does the coming of this Age of the Grandmothers mean for our world? The archetype of Grandmothers is such a different paradigm for the western world, it turns everything on its head. The abuse and suppression of women has been hand-in-hand with the over-use and pollution of Mother Nature. This should not be surprising, for I believe the root cause of these effects is the same. Power and excessive knowledge has not been balanced by wisdom. The right-brain, which I believe is the corridor to the soul, has all but atrophied in the western mind and left mainstream culture bereft of

the feminine perception of the sacredness in all things. As Brooke Medicine Eagle said once, "We've been 'yanging it up' for at least seven-thousand years!" Many people don't know of a different history, and thus, have no idea that things really could be different, could be more loving, beautiful and balanced than the violence and dysfunction we have witnessed for so long. But I have believed all my life that a different future is possible for humanity.

How fitting it is that the ones to lead the world back into balance and into a more wholesome future should be grandmothers, for they represent all that has been lost to western reality. Older women have been the most marginalized people of the modern world. That they are old, that they are women, and that, in the case of the Thirteen Grandmothers, they are indigenous, presents a striking contrast to the value-system of the status quo...and a perfect antidote to it.

Being older, we grandmothers represent the wisdom garnered from many years of living, the holding of the blood within our wombs, and the perspectives which come from being beyond the busy tasks of raising children and running households. Being women, we have access to intuitive knowledge, the right-brain knowing, innate understanding of relationship, and capacity of deep compassion. These qualities come relatively easy for women when they allow themselves to value and cultivate their gifts. Furthermore, older women have the capacity to hold the best interest of all at heart.

When they are indigenous, grandmothers have not lost their intimacy with Nature, to traditional ways of wholeness and healing, to the spiritual world and to the truth of the Oneness of all things. As Paula Gunn Allen says of Native American societies in *The Sacred Hoop*:

"And as the cultures that are woman-centered and Mother-ritual based are also cultures that value peacefulness, harmony, cooperation, health, and general prosperity, they are systems of thought and practice that would bear deeper study in our troubled, conflict-ridden time."

Most of all, I believe that the Age of the Grandmothers represents unconditional Love, the absence of which, I believe, is at the heart of all social dysfunction, on all levels of human experience - from the personal to the family, the community, the

environment, the planet. Feeling itself to be severed from the Great Mystery, from Nature, from others and from one's true Self, the western world has felt lost and lonely for a long, long time. It has tried for centuries to fill the gaping black hole in the heart with the "things of this world" - success, attractiveness, material wealth, status, prowess and power. But these things are ultimately unsatisfying and empty. The greed, usurpation, abuse, anger and violence so prominent, still, are all expressions of this great, aching sense of loneliness within the human breast, although those so afflicted hardly know or admit this.

It is now, hopefully, the time to come out of the ages of such darkness into a new and brighter one predicted by the ancients of many cultures. If it is not yet a probability, at least it is a possibility, and who could be more appropriate in leading us into a brighter future than grandmothers...not just one, but many...sitting in sacred circles (not lined up in vertical hierarchies) bringing wisdom and healing to the Earth and all the Earth's children? In Sharon McErlane's book, *A Call to Power*, the spirit Grandmothers describe their influence:

"We give away, we help, offer and hold. We create a safe container for the family of life. The family is safe and secure because we are here, because we hold and support all. This particular quality of the one called grandmother is something everyone understands... Grandmothers seek the continuance of the family, they promote what is good in life; they seek to support. This is our mission... As the Grandmothers, we hold all fathers, mothers, and children of the family of life. These are our sons, our daughters and our grandchildren. We desire the highest good for all. This quality of selfless giving is what is now needed on Earth. This is why the Great Council of Grandmothers has come... We will be an easy form of the Divine for people to access. We are comforting and welcoming; we are a nurturing presence."

It is this nurturing presence that is exactly what the world needs now. As the Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers are quoted in Carol Schaffer's book:

"...it is time for the women of the world to own their innate wisdom. With the profoundly loving and sustaining power of the sacred feminine in the very marrow of our bones, women can return the world to the

Age of GMs cont. on page 3

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

Editors Corner

By Kit Wilson

"This Is It, Schmidt, No Dress Rehearsal". Do any of you know where that comes from? I certainly don't, but I do remember my husband, Jack Wilson, saying it as a preface to any ending – or beginning. It was a favorite of his, and I figure this is an appropriate time to pull it out of my box of memories, dust it off, and use it. Because this Editor's Corner does mark an ending: a time of transition for me, for the Circle of Grandmother's Newsletter, and an exciting new leaf for our growing network of grandmothers, circles, and councils.

Robbie Lapp reports from her new home in Oregon: "Beginning with the first issue of The Circle of Grandmothers newsletter in March 2008, I will head up a team to continue producing and distributing our quarterly newsletter. It is going to take a team of eight people to do what Kit and her son, John volunteered, (along with their helpers) to get each issue of the newsletter to us. The team is still being formed but as of now the following women have

volunteered to participate: Robbie Lapp, Editor; Gracie Rogers, Co-Editor; Eleanor Gallagher, Editor-at-Large; Sr. Rebecca Ridelshimer, Layout /Design; and, Subscriptions Manager, Judith Billings. Team members still needed are a Financial Manager, Circulation Manager, and Archivist. In addition, Kit has volunteered to become a Contributing Editor and will help in any way she can to facilitate a smooth transition for Robbie. If you or someone you know has an interest in becoming a volunteer member of The Circle of Grandmothers newsletter, please contact:

Robbie Lapp

P.O. Box 155, Hood River, OR 97031

Cell: 920/737-7797

circlerobbie@yahoo.com

Subscriptions and changes of address may be sent to Judith Billings at:

1533 E. Spring St., Tucson, AZ 85719"

With all those good hearts and minds moving into position it seems I am free to stop fretting and say goodbye. 2008 will be a year of transitions for me – some I am expecting and others are sure to surprise.

For the first time, with much ambivalence, we have purchased a "fake" tree.

For the first time in fifteen years we are without a dog. Our beloved chocolate lab, Shadow, departed with great dignity last October, shortly after the Arizona Gathering. And as we complete our grieving and scatter her ashes at the creek she loved we are waiting so see if there is another dog "being" wanting to sleep on Shadow's empty bed and play with her toys.

For the first time next August I will say goodbye to my 70s, which means I am already in my 80th year. That, in itself, continues to astound me. The mystery of a new decade and another adventure awaits.

For the first time, as I think I mentioned in September, we have a guest room. Heath has a grown-up job in a bank and is sharing a house full of young friends. He is saving his money to return to Brazil and his girl friend early in 2008.

And, of course, for the first time in over ten years John and I will no longer be doing the Newsletter. Before we put this issue to bed I want to say this: For both of us the

Newsletter has been a true labor of love. I am grateful to John, without whom there would never have been this marvelous interlude in my life. And as I look back over those years I am filled with gratitude for the privilege of being a part of what has been an amazing adventure. All of us Grandmothers *lived* the Newsletter. Without your help, your contributions in putting it together, your written words, your subscriptions and the marvelous letters and emails encouraging us and thanking us for a particular article or issue, there would be no Circle of Grandmother News. And most of all I am grateful to have been a participant/observer in the incredible, exciting story that is still unfolding. Lotus Linton Howard speaks eloquently about *The Age of the Grandmothers* in her cover article. We have all been *living* that age. All I can say is – it's a great time to be an elder. Meanwhile health news: Grandmother Marti Beddoe is recovering from her bypass surgery and Robbie Lapp is recovering from a dose of Oregon weather.

The holidays are upon us. On the traditional side I, who no longer cook, will be cooking a turkey and the house will be filling with family and friends. I will be counting my many blessings, which certainly include my connection with all of you.

And so, my friends, thank you. I hope you have days full of love. Do one thing you've never done before in 2008 and think of me. Many, many blessings from :

John, Whidbey, Max, the Spirit of Shadow, and me, Kit.

Signing off.



Age of GMs cont. from page 2

Garden of Eden it was meant to be."

What a beautiful time to be alive and to be participating in this great age for humankind...the Age of the Grandmothers! I am so deeply honored to be informed and inspired by the Great Council of Grandmothers. And I am blessed beyond measure to be a woman, to be a grandmother, and to be a member of these grandmothers' circles... a part of this sacred, feminine bridge from a dying, dysfunctional consciousness to the living consciousness of a restored and evolving world.

Lotus is currently writing a book entitled: *Song of the Grandmothers*. She can be reached at www.lotuslinton.com or soulspring@earthlink.net.

Suggested Reading:

A Call to Power: The Grandmothers Speak

By Sharon McErlane

Grandmothers Counsel the World

By Carol Schaefer

The Great Silent Grandmother Gathering

By Sharon Mehdi



The **Circle of Grandmothers** Newsletter is a labor of love published four times per year. Subscriptions are \$20 for a January to December year (simplifies bookkeeping).

Editor: Kit Wilson

Co-Editor: Gracie Rogers

Layout & Design: John Whitewolf

Spiral Logo Design: Virginia Hall

Contact information:

Kit Wilson

3907 E. Campbell

Phoenix, AZ 85018

Phone: (602) 955-6818

E-mail: kitw@cox.net

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

Profiles in Living - A Look in the Grandmother Mirror

Continuing our exploration of the lives of women who have played an active role in the Council of Grandmothers. *As told to Gracie Rogers.*

An Interview with Ilse Swihart

Question: Ilse, I'm so happy to have this opportunity to talk with you and hear some of your story. I met you at the first Arizona gathering I attended in 2003 and remember thinking how beautiful you are and how gentle. Tell me in your words, who are you?

Ilse Swihart: I see myself as an evolving spiritual being and what is forming me is my love of nature, music, art, dance, literature, and poetry. These forms of expression are always keeping me in touch with my deepest feelings about life and our cosmic existence and this great appreciation of beauty I see reflected in my gardens. Nature shows me a way of blending, cultivating with awareness of my surroundings. In nature's garden I do my best creative thinking and conflict solving. In short, it is in nature where I connect with Mother Earth and my Being.

Q: Can you give me an example?

IS: This year on the 14th of November, I turned 71...launching my 72nd spin around the sun and becoming a member of the Elder Circle. However, the 13th of November is just as meaningful to me, since on this day 14 years ago my mother died. This year on the 13th I dug a big hole in my garden and planted a Red Oak. Planting that oak tree was an expression of my heartfelt connecting and thanksgiving for the immeasurable gifts my mother passed on to me and which are now living on through me...singing and gardening are on top of that long list.

Q: Can you tell me more about your garden? It feels like it is a window into your soul.

IS: We live in the high desert (5,000 feet altitude) on a subdivided large ranch. It is cattle and horse country. Our home is surrounded by evergreen live oak trees, Arizona cypress, all sorts of shrubs, yuccas, agaves, cacti, bear grass, grasses, wildflowers which include the weeds; we have a great abundance of wild-life all around us, the four legged ones, the ground hugging ones, the slithering ones, my many feathered friends. There is a beholding of sights, sounds, smells, silence at all times. Our views are expansive, across the valley and the canyons leading over the foothills to the Santa Rita Mountains which soar to a 7,900 foot peak and reach to magnificent skylines. So, naturally my humbling gardening contributions are wild, unkempt, with sparse plantings, a multitude of rocks (the ancient ones) which I adore for their

colors, shapes, show of fossilized sea and land creatures and plants. There are special places where I created altars of arranged rocks, bones, twigs, shells, crystals and other finds. Drought conditions over several years have withered a number of trees around the house and we topped these trees to about five feet in height stumps and by placing a large rock on top of each one; I named these "rock trees" my guardians or sentries.

Q: Clearly, your garden is a large part of your world. What about the world where you were born?

IS: I was born in a small town in southwest



Ilse Swihart

Germany in 1936. Gueglingen is centrally located in a fertile valley with a river running through it. To this day, the town retains the remnants and several structures of a walled medieval town, significant enough to have its own coat of arms. In the past the town was dominant over the surrounding villages within 3-5 km distance and supportive of four castles within the same perimeter. These were all farming communities and growing up in such a rural environment allowed for great freedom of movement and imagination. Everyone knew each other within the community and knew many in the neighboring communities and many were related. The town square, soccer field, churchyard, meadows, fields, vineyards, orchards, forests were our playground and only the vesper bell at 4 o'clock made us hurry home. The town was Lutheran and the Gothic church was the highest and most dominant structure on the town square.

It was on that square where my family lived and ran an Inn. The city hall, the baker, the shoemaker, the butcher, the bank and, most important of all, the beautiful and very impressive octagonal water fountain completed the square. This was the center of town and the most important gathering ground in town and since all events always included music, we got to experience lots of it.

My father and my mother were born and raised in Gueglingen and my mother's ancestry reached far back in time. They married and my older brother, my younger sister and I were born and raised there. The matriarch of the household was my paternal grandmother, a formidable personality. My mother, who had a higher education, ran the businesses, the inn and two distributorships. My mother also was a singer, she sang in the church choir, secular chorus, funeral choir and always around the house and at special functions. In times of distress, she would escape into her garden, ignoring the calls of her name and I remember that small space where she planted her dahlias and gladiolas which brightened up the vegetable and herb garden. My mother was left behind to stay with her grandmother when her parents left for America arriving in New York in 1924; she never joined them there. In 1949, several years after WWII, my grandmother and her second husband came back to Gueglingen for a visit and invited me to come to the USA for a visit. They had sold their house in Westchester County, New York and moved to Tucson, Arizona. In 1952 my father died of cancer and in 1953 a country girl came to the "Wild West", to Tucson - the land of Indians and cowboys, palm trees, orange and lemon trees. In 1954 I immigrated and came to live with my grandmother. Pap had died a month before and the boxes of oranges and grapefruits he had bought for me were rotting in the cool-room.

Q: How did your life in Tucson unfold?

IS: In the fall of 1954 I enrolled in Tucson High School, a very big place with a large number of students and with classes that were divided into a morning and afternoon shift. How I survived this immersion and graduated in the top ten percent of a class of 999 is beyond me. It was at Tucson High where I met my future husband to be. We

Ilse Swihart cont. on page 5

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

graduated together and went to the University of Arizona for two years. He got his BA and I went to Germany to study at Heidelberg University. He followed me there and we got married on Christmas Eve 1958 in the City Hall of Gueglingen. We returned to the U.S. in 1959 and lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts where Gregg went to Harvard and I completed my BA at Boston University. In 1961 we returned to Germany and attended the University of Freiburg. Our daughter, Tarjana, was born there. In 1965 our son, Brett Marc, was born. We returned to Tucson that same year – 1965. Our daughter, Natascha, was born 1967. My husband left the academic field and became a stockbroker and later a realtor. In 1976 we made the big move to the country – to Sonoita which is 50 miles southeast of Tucson and is where we still reside.

Q: Did you ever work outside your home?

IS: While raising my children, I opened and ran a graphic arts gallery. We offered original prints, etchings, engravings, and lithographs from the old masters on up to modern and contemporary artists. Life became hectic, chaotic and out of control and I found I needed to spend more time with my family. To this day the guilt of an absent mother haunts me. In 1995, after our children had left home, I became a hospice volunteer and I am still continuing this service. The other activity in which I find fulfillment is singing. I joined a church choir in Patagonia over a decade ago and still sing with that choir every week. In the spring of every year since 2001, I have been practicing and singing with a chorale that is directed by a fantastic director from Boston. We present several performances in our communities during the Easter season.

Q: I hope I can hear you sing some day. Tell me about your connection to the Council of Grandmothers.

IS: I connected with the grandmothers of the Arizona Council during the time of their first gathering in 1994. In 1995 I attended my first gathering and have been present for all the following ones through 2006. This year coinciding events prevented me from taking part in the gathering, however, having become a member of the Circle of Elders, I was able to join the Council gathering of grandmothers for half of a day and for that I am thankful. Being present in the circles of grandmothers over all these years has enriched my life tremendously. The gather-

Grandmother: Reflections on the Word

At the Arizona Council of Grandmothers Gathering in September 2007 one small circle asked the question "What does the word 'Grandmother' mean to you?" The Grandmothers in the circle each jotted down a short reflection. Here are the results:

Wow! What a word for me.

Close, personal, grandmother Rose – missing.

Violet – barely there but a part of my ancestral background.

Connected to the larger world of grandmothers .

The business of 'Caring For' on a very practical day-by-day basis, or on a larger scale the 'Keepers of Wisdom'.

Then, I am a Grandmother so I not only inherit 'the wisdom' but it is now my role to disperse, protect, and see that I play my part in the on-going Spiral.

Just read the book about Mary starting our Grandmother Network and was most impressed with the energy, fun, and movement.

Unsigned

I never knew my grandmothers. They both died before I arrived, but I was named for both of them and they were ever-present in my life. My mother still missed her own mother terribly, and a dominant theme in my childhood was her regrets that I had missed her. Through my mother's stories and repeating Dobbe's sayings in her Russian-Yiddish accent, I felt her still with me.

Growing up I envied children with grandmothers who loved them without reservation.

Judy Atwell

ings provided me with a safe place to heal and express myself, to connect with kindred spirits and to feel accepted and loved. All the gatherings I attended were held in circle and all were magical and it got even better when Kit Wilson presented us with the teaching of PeerSpirit circling based on Christina Baldwin's book, Calling the Circle. These circling practices nurtured us and encouraged us to dig deeper and reach higher and become aware of the Spirit dwelling within. In Thankfulness!

Ilse, thank you so much for sharing your story. I'm honored to be the listener.



Grandmother...

She is round and fierce – and cooking, always cooking. She sneaks into the pantry to eat oysters out of the shell and as I peek in on her, she lifts her forefinger to her lips and says 'Shh'. I obey! She is a diminutive warrior, producing from her stove the daily sustenance of life with a smile on her moon-shaped face. She laughs heartily at my attempts to help her by using a whole can of Ajax on the bathroom floor. Her hands are as lined as her face, but gentle, as she guides the hands of a novice in her first attempts to create fine stitches or tat delicate lace edgings for crisp cotton pillowcases.

She is the concept of 'Grandmother' – the melding in my mind of the one who birthed my mother and the one who was gifted to me by marriage. Both reside in my heart and memories.

Roseann Day

"I come from two grandmothers who seemed very different to me as a child. One was a heartland farm wife and school teacher – dark and severe as the land she lived on. Though I saw her often she seemed distant and a little frightening. The other I never met, but I felt I knew her from my mother's stories of Home. She gazed down from her photo on our mantle with a halo of white hair and an everlasting sweet smile.

Then I knew only the exterior essence of each grandmother. Now I wonder about their interior spirits - hopes, dreams, joys, and losses. I wonder who they really were.

Unsigned

'Grandmother' – I behold, hear, resonate with, and embrace you, sacred grandmother – present within me, surrounding me, holding us, guiding and loving us all.

Know our intention, sacred 'abuela', to preserve with you the peace, the unity, the compassion, the healing that is your legacy, your gift to us.

Remember us, grandmother, remember that we still grow as your grandchildren, evolving ones, moving deeper and deeper into the profundity of your wisdom. We yearn to become, to know, and to experience in every moment the blessings of your eternal serenity.

Lucille Ann Meltz



When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

From Gracie Rogers

Farewell and Hello

The grandmother sits listening, watching.
She does what wise women do, she helps -
the younger grow, the older heal.
She has carried the bundle of words many years;
is ready now to pass it on.
She stands, begins to walk toward the cottonwood trees;
melds into shadow in the soft evening light.
The grandmother is gone.
No, wait!
Look, there she is, settled on a bleached stone rock;
paper on her lap, pen in her hand.
She looks up, a peaceful expression fills her face.
I am here she smiles, and begins to write.

Gulf Coast Council of Grandmothers Report

From Carolyn Garbett

We are just about ready to launch our yearly gathering in Fairhope Alabama, February 19-22nd, 2008. This is our ninth gathering and as a special blessing this year Sharon McErlane who wrote "A Call to Power, the Grandmothers Speak" is coming to the gathering and will be speaking on the first day. We are all very excited to hear what she has to tell us.

Much planning has been afoot and most everything is ready. Our Ceilidh this year will be "A Garden Party" and we will dress up for that in the evening. Drumming will be very important this

year and we have new plans for the Elder Council. Also we will be continuing our practice of "The Giveaway - practicing the art of letting go of our treasures and receiving a treasure from another Grandmother.

If you have the time to give yourself a wonderful gift to start the New Year, come and see us here on the Gulf Coast. If you need more information call me: Carolyn Garbett 251-945-1295 or email: msparis98@gmail.com

See you in February.



Poet's Corner

Sound and silence
Sunshine, shadow, circle
Closing, opening
Breaths of spirits
offering names
Passing on healing
Singing bowls
placed on the bowels
of sisters
Song, smiles, sighs
Tears spilling over
Stories, sharings, self-reflection
Sound and silence

*Robbie Lapp, 2007
Harbin Women's Retreat*

Workshop Announcement

For Grandmothers inspired by the September Newsletter article, "Words That Endure: Writing Your Values Legacy": Edna Groves will be offering Leap Into Legacy-Writing! in Tucson. Workshop dates are Friday February 29 (7-9 PM) and Saturday (9-4) March 1, 2008. For more information see Edna's website (www.wordsthatendure.com) or call her at (630) 204-1650. Register with local contact Judith Billings, judithspins@peoplepc.com.



Dear, Dear Grandmother Kit,

Now look what you've done. You have me sitting here in gratitude and sadness all at the same time. I'm so grateful to have known you in the ways I have and am sad that you have decided it is time to pass on the editing of The Circle of Grandmothers newsletter.

I have known you only four short years and have helped you with the newsletter for less than half of that time. I've sat in circles with you during Arizona gatherings and listened during our many long telephone visits to your stories of how The Council of Grandmothers began and evolved. I feel like I've known you for a much longer time. I loved The Council of Grandmothers from the first Arizona gathering I went to in 2004 because you were what Marti, Allegra, Shirley and Sr. Virginia Mary told me I would find there. I remember my first impressions of you: gosh, she has so much history of this group; wow, has she got strong feelings about certain things!; she's funny!; she's cantankerous; she's so wise. To me Kit, you are life-sized real and that is the lens you passed to me to look through as I got to know all the extraordinary grandmothers I met. Most of all, from the first moment I met you, I felt your strength.

I'd like to tell you why I feel your strength is important. We all know what The Council of Grandmothers is - a grassroots, loosely woven group of women living all over the country who gather together every so often in support of one another. There is no organization, no membership, nobody in charge. Yet, The Council has held together and grown for more than a dozen years. The link that has connected us all has been The Circle of Grandmothers newsletter. And, as the Editor, you have been the anchor. You have been the one who made sure the newsletter was written by grandmothers and was for grandmothers. You gave The Council a voice. And, we heard.

Like any such venture, there have been ups and downs - issues and challenges - any of which could have dissolved The Council or turned it into something entirely different. But, just like a ship with its anchor dropped, you held onto your ideals and kept Mary's original vision steady. Kit, your strength was our anchor.



When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

Council of Elders GM 2007

"Half Moon of Elders"

Irene (81): I know what I know but I don't know what you know so I want to hear what you have to say.

Kit (79): I've discovered that I can only do one thing at a time. This coming year I am cultivating my imperfections... "honoring" them. Aging & change – from my experience, you can always keep changing you can't tell from day to day where you'll be! So, I prepare for that. I learned that the hardest thing for me to change is my attitude. It is important for me to take in the pain in the world and hold it in my heart and try to transform it and send it out to the world as love.

Nonine (77): My desire is to allow change to happen to me. Wisdom is the acknowledged use of acquired facts. Nobody isn't recognizing that change is here. I want the Earth to hear the Grandmothers and heal.

Barb N (77): Working with children is constant change. I am in gratitude for my profession (being a Nanny) which keeps me fluid. In gratitude I have patience.

Verlie (85): Change just comes... I don't have time to worry about change. I dance a lot. Friends and love shared means much to me. I'm trying to improve as I go along. I Bless each and every one of you for your highest and best, now and forever in Divine Order.

Ruth (74): Our essence – each of us leaves a piece of themselves. If I bring negativity with me, I leave that also... so bring the best with you wherever you go.

Paula (76): On growing older – "too soon old and too late smart." Ram Das said after his stroke and need for assistance, "in my future vision, I hadn't seen my excessive need from others." ... I can relate to what he said. Now for me it is hard to adjust to looking older... in the past I always looked younger than my age. All my life I was a "doer", now slowed by necessity, I am forced

to "Be" and not "do" So still, I continue to learn Life's lessons.

Mona (77): Being open to change and to others keeps us young. In losses there are new experiences presented to us.

Ilsa (71): Lover of Life – life is never the same, it always changes... like water in the river, it is never the same... sometimes slower or faster or even waterfalls. Change is ever present. I like to be more aware and open to all these things happening. The hardest lessons teach the most. When fear sets in you have to say "Yes!"... that too shall pass. Float along in life with a loving heart and compassion and the battle is won.

Nancy M (73): Expect the unexpected. By staying in the moment, I am accepting what comes my way. There's a shift of attitude. As I work with at risk youth I am seeing the younger generation come to Nature. Nature is a healer in my life. Also humor, don't take yourself too seriously. I couldn't exist without that lightness. We connect through essences, an aching to connect with each person – Christ within. In Mending the Sacred Hoop, I watch the energy with movement and know we are making a difference... a sense of groundedness and confidence. Be in the Universe and feel the energy around you. Keep the absurd!

Marion (83): To grow old – the writings miss it! Totally unpredictable and no idea of what the next day will bring to you. As long as I can use my hands, I can go on for a long time. I just don't know when to stop driving!!

Beverly (72): Beware! I'm in a heightened state of senility! Getting older has a fog attached to it – I forget what I wanted to say... you need a sense of humor. My retirement has been wonderful – I highly recommend it. I've been able to give up some of the control I needed at work. My daughter called to say that my water heater at home had broken but she is willing to take over

so I'll just extend my visit here in Arizona till it is all fixed... Adjustment!

Gerry (79): In my 40s life was hellish but now things have turned around and I'm in the best place I've been in so far! The most difficult thing in my life was releasing my 23 yr old son who died. I was able to release him to Divine Mother and I learn that there is great power in the mind with emotion. What challenged me was how to connect with him after he died? I can send Love wherever he is and that's my connection wherever he is and that's my connection with everybody – send Love.

Barrie (72): I've been coming to the Grandmothers from age 58 til 72... a sense that growing older is a positive place where one can learn and giveback, learn and give back and keep opening. I love the Elder speaking with the focus on wisdom. Today I could immediately feel the Spark of Life happening here in all our hearts. The connection is Love. I hope we can grow deeper and deeper in our hearts... the connection is Love. I wish we could all see our own beauty.

Gail W (71): one spark to pass on – when I was growing up I was always physically large ("a big girl"), smart, in charge, class president. I was always in charge wherever I went. Now, as I get older and things change, it has been hard to accept that maybe I wouldn't be in charge forever! Now I've opened to accept my children's suggestions.

Mary (76): Discoveries of the last year – dancing to music at home for exercise with no balance problems. Dancing makes things a whole lot better (and dancing doesn't have to be on your feet). Changing the Brain – the surest way to atrophy your brain is to put it in the same environment all the time... so get out and do things! The past 6-7 years have been the happiest years of my life!



Newsletter Subscription

Name _____ E-mail _____

Address _____ Phone _____

City, ST Zip _____

Newsletter subscriptions run from January through December for ease of bookkeeping.

Please send this form with \$20 to

Circle of Grandmothers Newsletter
Judith Billings
1533 E. Spring Street
Tucson, AZ 85719



Circle of Grandmothers Newsletter
Kit Wilson
3907 E. Campbell Ave.
Phoenix, AZ 85018