



# Circle of Grandmothers

**When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.**

## Special points of interest:

- Our Memories of Cora
- The New Newsletter Team Complete with Mug Shots
- Updated Contact List
- Gulf Coast Gathering and Photographs
- News from the Councils
- Arizona Council Registration
- Poetry Throughout
- Subscription Form and Newsletter by email

## The Cielo Gathering of Grandmothers Meets Technology

By Connie Spittler

A Midwestern writer/producer of film, video and multiscreen shows, my corporate clients came from all over the country. My cinematographer husband loved new technology, so I grabbed onto his shirttails and followed his enthusiasm. Our company jumped into video production soon after it made the scene. In the 80's, we witnessed the emerging home videotape market with Betamax and VHS fighting a frantic battle for supremacy, which VHS ultimately won. After Bob and I moved to Tucson in 1991, I decided to use my time on projects that meant something special to me. With new friends Ruth Gardner as inspiration and Lily Cann as videographer, I wrote a video about women celebrating age.

Ruth heard information from Nicole Christine about an upcoming gathering of women at a ranch in Arizona. Once, I'd heard about an interesting woman with a bejeweled name who lived in that area and occasionally I tried to remember it. Sapphire. Emerald. Ruby. Then Ruth said the magic word: Diamond. When Mary invited us to Cielo en Tierra, Heaven on Earth, for a visit, I grabbed my sample tapes.

VHS technology had slowly found consumers, but not everyone had a home machine. Mary Diamond did and she believed in meeting change head on. She asked me to get figures on producing a documentary of the first Grandmother Gathering.

When I checked with women videographers in Tucson, the price was too high for the shoestring budget, but Mary received a potential name from Shirley Tassencourt. The woman, Marilyn Bacon, lived in California and produced yoga videos. I contacted Marilyn and

she agreed to shoot the tape for expense money, using the simplest portable equipment. I volunteered my time as producer/editor.

I wondered if all 16 women would agree to be interviewed, but they did. I delved into their lives, philosophies, heartbreaks, dreams and wisdom as Marilyn taped away. Between times, we shot scenes of the women alone or together, surrounded by and including the natural beauty of the ranch in the high Sonoran Desert.

Back home, I played the footage over and over to extract the essence of Mary's vision, before writing the script. With no funds for postproduction, I went to the local access studios, where citizens work free on less than quality equipment. Not happy with the finished product, I put in my own money and did some improvement at an expensive production house. The result was the Grandmother Speak: Healing the Earth video, which became one program in my Wise Women Video Series. With no money for promotion, I've only sold a small number of tapes, but am always happy to pass on the words of the amazing Grandmothers that Mary Diamond brought to that first gathering. The video has been used as a women's resource and to start new Grandmother Gatherings. Nursing school students, cancer patients, abused women and prisoners have seen the video, and then afterward, talked about their lives. From a distance, I've been privileged to be part of that.

Lately, I feel the breezes of change blowing more quickly, as progress rushes along. Cable. Cell phones. Computers. Google. Email. Airline E-tickets. E-newsletters. Change is not easy, particularly as we age. Are

we ready for the technology that is available? Do we accept these offerings? Sometimes even though the advancements are difficult to learn, the benefits are great. I remember Mary's words, "Meet change head on and do not be afraid."

So I continue to hold onto Bob's techno coattails, but as far as my videos, finances intervened. I didn't have funds to transfer my VHS tapes to DVD, the newest technology, so I sensibly decided to let my video business play out, once my stock left the shelves.

But wait. Last fall, I gave a writing workshop at a multi-cultural women's conference and put out a few remaining Wise Women brochures. A woman purchaser for the Tucson libraries inquired if the videos were available on DVD. I said, "Sorry, no." Then she asked if an order of six copies of each program, a total of 36 DVD's, would cover the cost of conversion. This would be my largest order, ever, and yes, the DVD's are now in several Tucson libraries and also available to others through me.

I learned from one woman that the Universe wasn't through with the Grandmother Speak video or the Wise Women Series. The sun, the moon, the stars and technology decreed that the wisdom inspired by Mary Diamond is still needed and still pertinent. Of course, I always believed that. I often think of her words as I try to embrace change. Interestingly enough, I find that often change embraces me, but then; we all need a big hug, don't we?

For more information, see the Resources column on page 2.



Connie



## Circle of Grandmothers

### Resources

From *The Wise Women Series* by Connie Spittler

1. Grandmothers Speak, Healing the Earth: Video of first grandmother gathering at Mary Diamond's ranch.
2. Architects of Change, Two Grandmothers: Video about environmental philosophies of Mary Diamond with straw bale home and Shirley Tassencourt with earth dome home.
3. Sage for All Seasons: Video about Shirley Tassencourt as teacher, sculptor, environmentalist and writer.
4. Celebration of Age and the Croning Ceremony: Video featuring Ruth Gardner with Cora Miller gracing the cover.

*Wise Women Series* is available in two formats: specify VHS \$25 or

DVD \$25, plus shipping and handling of \$4/first tape or DVD, \$2/second.

Order from Connie Spittler:

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Velma Frye offered song circles in the 1st and 4th Gulf Coast Council gatherings and has a new CD, *Seven Sacred Pauses* with 21 songs composed and performed by Velma, adapted from Macrina Wiederkehr's poetry and prose. To order the new CD and songbook and other circle song CDs go to [www.velmafrye.com](http://www.velmafrye.com) or phone 850/942-4849 or write to Velma Frye at 1507 Atapha Nene, Tallahassee, FL 32301.

### GROWING UP by Hannah Rees, Heartland Council

Growing up, I heard

"Plan, strive, achieve."

Now that I'm older, I'm discovering  
being me is the most important job I have.

My poems may not fit the mold,

my songs may be off key,

but they're genuinely mine -

a birth announcement

of the emerging me!

#### Follow Up

\* Grandmother, Marti Beddoe, of Naperville, Illinois sends this check-in note: My deepest gratitude to all for the kind prayers and messages you sent as I recovered from heart surgery. I am settled into a lovely luminal space as I retreat and enjoy contemplating the mystery and beauty of life in the present moment. The body is healing slowly and steadily. The mind is introspective and curious. The spirits are happy and optimistic. All my purple love and gratitude for the Grandmothers of the world.

\* The Water Blessing Song of written wisdom from the grandmothers in Canada is spreading throughout the world through gatherings like our councils and circles. The grandmothers say it is not to be sent on the Internet or published. However, you may obtain a copy from Lorraine Norrgard, 345 Prevost Road, Cloquet, MN 55720; phone 218/879-2288.



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## Circle of Grandmothers

### Coming in Future Newsletters

- Croning Ceremony in Louisiana
- An Award Winning Speech on Being an Elder
- Profiles in Living - A Look in the Grandmother Mirror
- Deepening Circle Practice
- Hunting for Archives

And what else you send to us:

- Poetry and Writings to: Eleanor Gallagher
- Council News to: Gracie Rogers
- Articles to: Robbie Lapp
- Photographs to: Sr. Rebecca

### Editor's Column

Reflections by Robbie Lapp

Rolling out our first issue this spring of 2008 with me as editor is a deep pleasure and satisfaction, very similar to birthing a baby. We present to you a newsletter expanded in size to share the anticipated eight pages of grandmother news, and A Wreath of Written Remembrances of Cora Miller created in "a talking circle round" done via e-mail and fax since Cora's death March 10, 2008. Gracie Rogers, Co-Editor, conceived the idea that we, the Newsletter Team, introduce ourselves by describing our roles; and, with our photos, we and you together see our team's faces for the first time. We also introduce two new features: a column titled *To Follow Up, Add On, and Correct* bringing you updated information from past newsletter articles and *Resources* giving you contact and ordering information for grandmother creations mentioned in this issue.

For this newsletter of the grandmothers I doff the hat of "Editor", offer a circle of hats to the Newsletter Team, and know you've found one of the "Reader" hats. My hat is raised in respect and appreciation to the two grandmothers who have written in this role. Ruth Gardner

began in the original council when the question was, "What will each of us offer in service to this Cielo Circle?" She offered "to type up and mail out what was sent to her" to keep the 16 grandmothers of Cielo connected and abreast of how each was faring. Kit Wilson served second as Editor, expanding the newsletter as the vision of Mary Diamond continued with the spreading and connecting of councils and small circles. The mastheads of each of their first and last newsletters are on the back cover.

My introduction to the Council of Arizona Grandmothers came when Grandmother, Alabama Terry Bourne, beat the drum in her drumming circle. She asked others to join her for this indescribable four days of sitting in council with elder women, so I came with her to the 1997 Arizona Council's Fourth Gathering held at the Triangle T Ranch in the Dragoon Mountains.

Mary Diamond, the council founder, had passed less than three weeks before. PeerSpirit, as a way of circling, was introduced. A guardian of the spirit of the circle was selected and given a bell to

ring and a guardian of the spirit of Mary Diamond was selected and given one of Mary's special little red hen's feathers to wave to ask for and share Mary's wisdom and guidance. Sister Virginia Barta bid a fond farewell, saying this would be her last Arizona Council. Terry shared her vision of starting a council and having a gathering on the Gulf Coast as we headed home.

I've been "in" ever since and this February, I sat "out" the 9th Gulf Coast Council Gathering from clear across the country in my new hometown of Hood River, Oregon, lighting a candle at my table as the council was lighting theirs. I felt both like a child leaving the nest and a proud ma-ma knowing the Gulf Coast has grown up and is getting along "right fine."

I close, honoring the gift of this newsletter connection and offering you the opportunities of contributing both with content and a paid subscription. To those of us who have mailed in subscriptions and to those who now consider the possibility, I say thank you for "When the grandmothers speak, the earth will heal."

### A Beautiful Tapestry of Peace by Small Circle One

#### Arizona Council of Grandmothers 14th Gathering October 2007

Expand PEACE through loving and nurturing children of the next generation... and the next.

"Children" is all-inclusive. Age is not important. We are ALL Children of GOD.

When one prefers their own children over the children of others, war is near.

Peace is our only security.

Expanding PEACE is about the heart - not the mind.

I live in deLight and gratitude each day and promote this by loving all.

Through our energy things change.... the "100th Monkey" theory.

Clear off negative energy to create and recognize POSITIVE ENERGY left there.

When one has a faith in abundance, it is very hard to stay poor.

We honor the spirit, soul and heart of all beings who walk this realm.

May the integrity of our honor seed the fruit of PEACE.

When we speak our TRUTH in PEACE, the world shifts.

Peace comes from not having attachments to things.

Peace is freedom; nothing to lose, nothing to fight for.

Verlie Barton, Shearly Chamberless, Ann Marie Clock, Judie Garnet, Caroline (Running Dove) Kane Krause, Nancy Masland, Patrika Murphy, Barbara Nelson, Sr. Rebecca Redelsheimer, Jacqui Smith, Beverly Thorne.

## Circle of Grandmothers

The Circle of Grandmothers Newsletter Team

With last December's newsletter, Editor, Kit Wilson, and her son, John Whitewolf, Layout and Graphics Designer, retired after more than 10 years of service with the *Circle of Grandmothers*, which Kit described as "a labor of love". Clearly, the newsletter, as a connecting thread between the grandmothers and their councils, is an indication of love returned. Heartfelt abundant gratitude to Kit and John, and to Ruth Gardner,

who offered at that first gathering "to type and mail" a newsletter and birthed *Circle of Ceilo*.

Beginning with this issue, a team of eight grandmothers spread across the U.S. are collaborating to produce our quarterly newsletter. Working through free internet conference call circles and e-mails, we shared many great ideas in continuing to meet our reader's needs. The team reached consensus on two intentions:

**To have each reader become a paid annual subscriber, creating a self-sustaining, firm financial foundation, and**

**To continue both the printed mail copy and offer e-mail to those who choose to receive the newsletter this way. The cost is the same for either delivery.**

The February 2008 Gulf Coast Council was our test market. Of 42 grandmothers attending, 20 subscribed, 12 chose land mail and 8 chose e-mail. A large print edition can be made from the e-mail version and technology allows an audio version to be delivered, perhaps in the future.



### **Editor, Robbie Lapp, Hood River, OR**

With the Editor's hat on, I sense my role is to enjoy connecting grandmothers with a newsletter which spreads and deepens our circle practice, and connects readers to the grandmother movement of wise eldering. Articles, ideas, "need to know" requests will gather teammates to tasks that are necessary for the four councils in the USA and those around the globe, nurturing the wisdom of "When the Grandmothers speak the Earth will heal." My job is creating a collage of the wisdom, visioning and practical experience that is expressed in your shared words, articles, art and photos to continue this world class newsletter.



### **Co-Editor, Gracie Rogers, Wheaton, IL**

As Co-Editor for Kit over the last two years, I took on the task of interviewing women and producing their stories for the *Profile* column of the newsletter. Once in a while I produced the feature article for Kit as I did last fall -- the article on legacy writing by Edna Groves of our Heartland Council.

I will assist Robbie in every way I can to experience the beautiful vision she described above. I will continue doing the *Profile* column and try, as Kit always did, to get a report from each of the Councils for every issue. Things have certainly changed with Kit and John's retirement, but as the saying goes, 'the more things change, the more they stay the same.' I take great comfort in that wisdom as well as in being a member of our newsletter team.



### **Editor-at-Large, Eleanor Gallagher, Tucson, AZ**

For some years Eleanor has been the newsletter's Poetry Editor. She plans to continue in this role and is expanding it to invite grandmothers' words and stories with all my enthusiasm and my skills in supporting writers. What I really like is coming up with prompts, topics, even exercises to stretch creativity and spark stories; helping someone who wants to write feel her words are valuable and get her piece into the form that expresses her message clearly within her style.

What I'm good at is making people feel they can write (because anyone can), that their message is important, their style unique. I am available for consultations via email (or in person here in Tucson) if women would like some help or just an ear/eye for their writing.



### **Layout and Graphics Design, Sr. Rebecca Redelsheimer, Tucson, AZ**

Sr. Rebecca defines her role as the newsletters' "techie". I will do what John Whitewolf has been doing for the last 10 years - typeset the newsletter. I have decades of experience in computers and graphic design, including teaching.

I have my own domain on a server on which I've set up a separate **password protected site** for the *Circle of Grandmothers* Newsletter. It is not a website and will only be accessible to those subscribers who wish to receive the newsletter electronically.



### **Subscription Manager, Judith Billings, Tucson, AZ**

Hello, Grandmothers, I am Judith Billings. When I heard Kit was giving up the newsletter after 10 years and a group was going to attempt to fill John's and her shoes, I thought to myself, 'I could help with mailing'. Somehow Robbie heard me think that and when she asked if I would, I said yes. That innocent willingness to help has evolved into becoming the Subscription Manager for the Circle of Grandmother's Newsletter, a job far more complex than I imagined. However, when women of good-will get together wonderful things happen. We have developed a system that seems to meet everyone's needs.

**When you look at your mailing label:** the date above your name tells you which issue will be your **last one**. There also is a turtle printed near the label. If she has **red eyes**, the issue in your hand is your **last one**. **For your subscription to continue**, send \$20 to *Circle of Grandmothers* Newsletter, Judith Billings, 2509 N. Campbell, #117, Tucson, AZ 85719. Renewal brings you four issues. Please check whether you would like to get the newsletter by e-mail or by regular mail. My computer program allows me to print labels, sort names and track when subscriptions end. **Your job, dear reader, should you choose to accept it, is to make sure I have your check and correct information.** Thanks and happy reading!

**Circle of Grandmothers**

**The Circle of Grandmothers Newsletter Team**



***Circulation Manager, Pamela Asbury Smith, Tucson, AZ***

My role in the newsletter chain is to do the mailing. Or, that was what it started out to be but seems to have now been upgraded. Since the newsletters will be collated and stapled when copied, all that is left is to fold (not mutilate), stamp and mail, which I will do.

I have been a newsletter editor in the past, responsible for writing, editing, copying, and ultimately mailing about 280 newsletters to a professional membership, so this is not a daunting task.



***Co-Archivist, Barbara Brewer Campbell, Oro Valley, AZ***

Greetings Grandmothers! I am Barb Brewer Campbell, gently known as "B". My position as the newsletter's Co-Archivist materialized out of a conversation with Judie Garnet about preserving the evolution of the Arizona Council of Grandmothers. The archivist's position then broadened and Judie and I joined the newsletter team as Co-Archivists.

I have always had a nurturing desire to preserve historical roots and values. So, this felt like Spirit leading in a very natural way. As Richard Pearce-Moses wrote, "Archivists keep records that have enduring value as reliable memories of the past, and they help people find and understand the information they need in those records." There are a number of projects that Judie and I have in mind and these will be revealed in the near future. This is my first year with the Council of Grandmothers while Judie has a very long history with the Grandmothers, so I believe we will make the perfect team.



***Co-Archivist, Judie Garnet, Tucson, AZ***

Judie Garnet here, ditto ditto to the above!!! I am very excited about working with "B" on preserving the incredible memories of the past and future history of the Grandmothers.



Grandmothers Council of Alabama/Florida

**Eclipse of the Moon**

## A Wreath of Written Remembrances of Grandmother Cora Miller

## From Ruth Gardner of the Original 16 Grandmothers, Tucson, AZ

I first met Cora during the first Gathering at Cielo en Tierra. Frequently I drove her to Grandmother's Gatherings although she did have a car and drove herself to in-town things. She was light, lively, a Renaissance Woman, interested in Native American lore, clothing, art, history and most of all loved to dance. Driving to Phoenix with her she was in mourning over the death of her beloved sister. She spoke of her childhood with a sister and a brother and her path to becoming a well-known dancer.

Cora was good company, had had an interesting life and loved socializing. She always insisted on giving me "gas money" despite the fact that I tried to dissuade her. It was great just sharing my car and trips with her. Cora was an elegant lady.

## From Kit Wilson of the 16 Original Grandmothers, Phoenix, AZ

I am sitting here at my computer staring out the window, not seeing, searching inward, into my head and my heart, looking for words to express the gifts Cora Miller brought - to my life, to our small circle that was seeded at the first Gathering, to so many Grandmother Gatherings over the years.

I am sitting here, memories of Cora flooding through me, but not finding words to describe the legacy she has left for us. And, in this moment, my focus shifts. I am looking out my window. It is a perfect spring afternoon: Outside in my front yard my three Chinese elm trees have turned a shiny Granny-Apple-Green. And the wind has picked up. And the trees have become Cora. Her branches are swaying and dipping, blowing back and forth, I can see the colorful scarves, Cora all movement and Grace. And I see her sturdy trunk, deeply rooted in the earth, rooted in values so strongly held that no strong arms with clubs, no barred cells, can move her. Her gifts were offered with the naturalness of the breeze in the trees. She brought joy and often a surprising deep belly laugh to our Circles.

## From Shirley Tassencourt of the original 16 Grandmothers, Dragoon, AZ

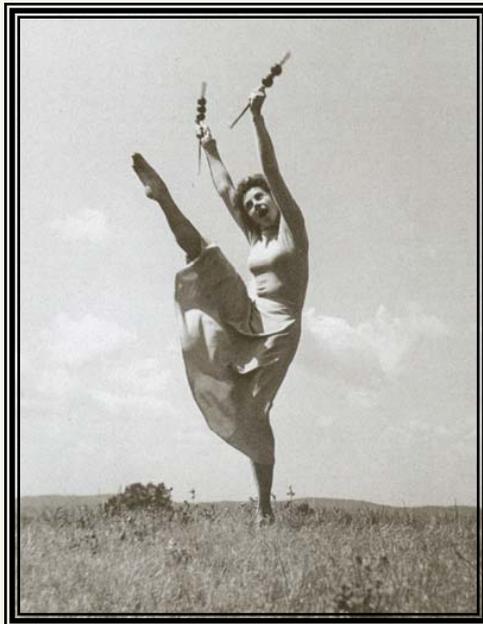
Oh, do I remember Cora! Bright, expansive and expressive. Oh, she showed how this body could move to almost anything. Her creativity was astounding, and even when she was sitting still the body was one piece, as if she would fly any minute. We invited her troupe to come to Whirling Yellow Way where Allegra and I live. It was a kind of homecoming, yes, we're here for the land. And now we celebrate as only this troupe and Cora could, with flags and movement. Thank you, Cora, for this.

## From Nancy Masland of the original 16 Grandmothers, Tucson, AZ

I see Cora, wrapped in light gauze flying through the air with her much younger students at a dance at 'Whirling Yellow Way', all of us in awe; and again teaching us from her chair to move, move, move, when she herself could barely stand; and again, at the Unitarian Church she attended, performing with scarves gracefully wafting above, below, and all around her; She was MOVEMENT and DANCE! May her grace be with us forever.

## From Mary Ann McClellan, Covington, LA

I came along the year after the original gathering, the second one at the Biosphere and I do remember dear Cora. She was such a gentle soul, but I remember her eyes, so knowing, so wise. I send a prayer that her journey be a blessed one and she will be missed.



## From Allegra Ahlquist of the original 16 Grandmothers, Dragoon, AZ

I too, remember when Cora and her dancers came to move so gracefully in the grass and on the rocks of this land. So brightly dressed, they were, and Cora waving her gigantic flag of many colors. I'm sure the native spirits here enjoyed that unusual spectacle. Cora was quite an activist, too, who marched against injustice and war.

She was arrested, and even put in jail for a short time. I attended a few of her dance classes in Tucson. She was such a skillful director for connecting body and spirit in ways never thought of in ordinary life. The personal discovery she evoked in us through movement was such a gift. She brought a very unusual quality of creativity to the Grandmothers Council. It was always good to see her bright eyes and the colorful artistic clothing she wore.

Goodbye, Cora, we will not forget you.

## From Judie Garnet, Tucson, AZ

One of my fondest memories of Cora was around 1966. We had a gathering of beautiful women for the weekend at Cielo en Tierra. We all gathered at the small yurt, took our shoes off and went in and were totally quiet. The music started and Cora, draped in chiffon started dancing elegantly around each one of us and in and out between us handing out colorful chiffon drapes to each of us. We were all encouraged to softly close our eyes and just let our body's move from the inside to the music. This was such a memorable experience for me because at first I felt so awkward, tall and anything but graceful. She taught me how to just move my naturally beautiful inner body so that by the end of the time I was actually feeling flowing and graceful. What a beautiful soul who gave so much to so many by simply being Cora.

## From Roz Miller, Dancer, Teacher

Cora, the most shining example of a warm hearted, principled, optimistic and fun loving human being, died peacefully after a long, slow process of decline. I never heard her complain. She remained gracious and appreciative, always. Cora lived and breathed as a creative artist and teacher of music and dance. Her passion for justice and peace was evident in her fearless political activism throughout her life. Her sense of delight sparkled in her laughter. I will always hear it.



## A Wreath of Written Remembrances of Grandmother Cora Miller

From Claire Cocke, Tucson, AZ

Another soul returned to The Source this week, a Grandmother who thrived in a life of dance in the truest sense. She learned at the feet of the Master of Creative Dance, Barbara Mettler, a pioneer known around the world and whose work touched Cora's life profoundly. Cora was her premiere student whose association with Barbara and Creative Dance began in the 1930s. Over time Cora became a master teacher of Creative Dance, a member of Barbara's Dance Company of the 1950s, and one of the first ever professors of dance at Bridgewater State College. Cora received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Association for Creative Dance in June 2002..

Our September, 2006 newsletter told of Cora, at the age of 88 and from her wheelchair, spontaneously leading a group of over 30 dancers who were participating at the annual workshop held at the Tucson Creative Dance Center. To the great amazement of all there she held the dancers captive and moving in small groups, individually, and as a whole large group for 30 minutes, uninterrupted! No words were ever used. She delighted in her life's work to the end. When I learned of her passing, I went to the Johrei Center and did their service for those who just made their transition. Cora had loved receiving Johrei and Jared seemed pleased when I told him I had honored her passing in the Johrei tradition.

From Kathie Murtey, Laguna Niguel, CA

I remember the first time I came to the Grandmothers in 1995. I don't remember talking face to face with Cora but I remember seeing her do her unbelievably graceful dance and being so moved by it. She was so sweet and graceful it took my breath away. Then I heard her speak, "I've been arrested 5 times!" All my sweet stereotypes exploded out of my head. Her arrests had been for protesting the war or protests for peace. She brought to life the strength and power of it ever since.

I remembered her last week when I was at the United Nations, beauty and grace in action. She has been a source of inspiration to me for the Commission on the Status of Women. I would often feel small and that I didn't matter while walking those august halls. Then I would remember the strength, grace, beauty and power of Cora. That memory allowed me to walk into the next meeting and participate.

From Judith Moore, Chimayo, New Mexico

I was new to the Grandmothers Council the year the crones gathered at the Triangle T Ranch in Dragoon Arizona. My first experience up in Oracle had opened to a vision, the vision Mary carried. I had never imagined that becoming an elder could be such a magical journey. I really hadn't related much to women's groups and did not have much in the way of mentorship as I crossed the threshold from Mother to Grandmother. The Council changed my life, because I met vibrant, creative, intelligent women who inspired me to the core of my being.

Cora was the shining star of my young eldership. Imagine a woman who had been arrested nine times for demonstrating for peace. Peter Paul and Mary have a new CD called *In These Times*, on it is a song with the words, "If you have been to jail for justice then you're a friend of mine." Every time I hear this song I pay heart tribute to Cora. My feelings about her went beyond admiration; I knew I was privileged to meet one of the great women of our times.

Cora was teaching a dancing workshop that year. I kind of wondered how it would be to take a dance class, a thing I never got to do growing up and from an "old woman?" I mean most dancers quit when they are young enough to be flexible. Her dance class changed me. I opened up to movement on a new level. I was grasped by the truth of movement and the power of the expression of dance for the feminine spirit.

Through the years I have held her in a special place in my heart and her passing is felt deep within me. Because she is an amazing spirit, her legacy lives in each of us, a legacy of courage, endurance, commitment to a noble cause and creativity. I am eternally grateful that I shared community with this truly great woman. Thank you Cora and go well on your journey of the soul.

From Robbie Lapp, Hood River, OR

Just as placing our names in the center of the circle is a pattern in our councils, in Arizona, gathering us in with the processional dance from the dining room to the grand circle space was Cora's delight filled task. As her physical energy lessened, but not her passion, the procession started just outside the circle.

Then came the year when Cora, staff and scarves in hand, gave her wonder filled context, and called upon Grandmother Barry to lead the dance processing around the room to claim our whole selves in that place and space. In 2006 her son Jared brought Cora with tender care, and entrusted her to her grandmother sisters. She arrived for her last Arizona Elders Council with dancing eyes, wise words and her feet already half way to heaven, legs propped up in her wheel chair. What a spirit embodied. Every lift of my leg and hoe-down of my heel is a blessing to and from Cora.

From JoAnne Reichlin, Tucson, AZ

When I told Frank and our daughter Stephanie about Cora the second thing I said was "this was the woman who stood up several times to support how she felt about a law or situation no matter the cost to herself" and Frank knew then who I was talking about. I do and will always admire that very much. I bought Cora a pair of lace socks once because when I picked her up and took her somewhere she saw and loved the ones I had on! I sat next to her several years ago at an elder gathering and that was such a special privilege - to hear her soft southern voice make comments about what was being said by others - most funny but true!! How glad I am that Cora was one of those present at the Grandmother's beginning to push it and to guide it. How fortunate I and all of us have been and encouraged in our own processes to have known and heard and watched Cora Miller live and be herself.

From Rev. Sarah Tomassetti, Tucson, AZ

My remembrance and connection to Cora Miller was through her dance and her peace and justice work. I can still see her spinning in circles and waving her hands in the air. Her movements were graceful and clear. She was such a patient dance instructor. Her passion for dance and her love of movement put a smile on my face. Cora's message to me was to keep moving as we grow in age and wisdom. She also passed on her commitment to social activism. Cora had courage to stand up for what she believed in. She was an inspiration. Cora has now made her transition to the other side. Her Spirit dances on!

### BE STILL

Macrina Wiederkehr, Velma Frye

Be still. Be still. Be still. Be still.  
Go deep into the silence of the  
night.  
And robe yourself in darkness.  
See with the heart into the  
dark  
of the night.

So silent the night.  
So dark the night.  
Be still. Be still.  
Be still. Be still.  
Be still. Be still.

## A Wreath of Written Remembrances of Grandmother Cora Miller

## From Terry Bourne, Gulf Shores, AL

My connection with Grandmother Cora began in 1995. I remember her sitting in the inner circle of elders, and upon speaking she said, "It's never too late to start something you believe in." Other gatherings bring the memories of her wonderful dancing, and her words of wisdom, "Never be afraid to speak out when you see an injustice," as she shared that she had been arrested five times for being involved in peaceful demonstrations and sit ins. Her last arrest was for protesting "Desert Storm".

In 1997 Cora inspired and encouraged me to make what became known as the "Grandmother Coats". In 1998 I was privileged to room with Cora, Barbara Furniss, Ruth Gardner, Connie Spittler, and Joanne Reichlin. As the evening rolled on into quite late, through the laughter and chatter, a firm little soft voice came from Cora's bed saying, "It's late girls. Goodnight." And the room became very quiet.

In October 2006 it was an honor and a blessing to be of service to her in a moment of need. Her loyalty to the Council of Grandmothers was always so evident. When it was no longer "comfortable" or "convenient" for her to attend the Councils, she set a clear example of the meaning of loyalty and commitment to the COG through her attendance and her offerings. Cora was one of the reasons I fell in love with "The Grandma's". What an inspiration. What an example of how not to fear growing old! Thank you, Cora.



## From Mary Lundeen, Tucson, AZ

At my first grandmothers gathering I was invited by Cora and the other grandmothers to join in some dancing. I was not interested in that sort of thing, but it seemed way too much more uncomfortable to sit it out than to get up and move, so began years of joy doing creative dance with Cora and others. To those who didn't know Cora, "I hope you dance."

## From Trina Mickels, Tucson, AZ

Cora was a sparkling, brilliant jewel. So precious. The Earth will be less for her leaving. "Elders are the jewels of humanity that have been mined from the Earth, cut in the rough, then buffed and polished into the precious gems that we recognize for their enduring value and beauty," Zalman Schachter. With fond memories, Trina.

## Barry Ryan, Tucson, AZ

When I think of Cora, I see her boundless beauty of expression in dance, in movement --and always her invitation for us to join in. But what I loved most in Cora was her boundless mind, interested, open to the world: books, art, people, learning of all kinds.

I never had a conversation with Cora where she wasn't responsive to the "other" -- the person across from her at the table or those experiencing injustice anywhere. I always came away from time with Cora sensitized and moved. She gave her life for life! What an example of how we can be all we would be



## CORA By Judy O'Leary

She came to the Gatherings  
with that old Greek name  
Cora, the young girl, maiden  
wearing it with twinkles  
in her eye, a flash in her smile

Long elegant dancing fingers  
with her slender frame that  
waltzed with each step,  
fabrics swishing  
encouraging all to MOVE,  
inside, outside, on a chair, in the  
air.

She brought to the gatherings  
quietly, softly, her essence  
and glowing color while observing,  
encouraging, and demonstrating  
how the maiden is hiding  
a Crone, she, the maiden is wise.

She gave to the gatherings  
her dance step, a vibration and  
balancing act of principles and  
strength in silence, conversation,  
beauty and courage.

Cora, our young girl,  
twirled, shuffled, and swirled  
upon this planet, at the Ranch,  
in our Circles leaving me  
with the 'WOW' factor  
a "Woman of Wonder"!

## Circle of Grandmothers

### 2008 Gulf Coast Council Gathering

#### A Wonderful Weaving of Women

#### Snippets from the Gulf Coast Grandmother's Council Nineby Robbie Schaffner

#### Pensacola, Florida-February 18

It is the day before the Council. The energy is giving me goose bumps. My mind searches for when this energy started to gather. I think of emails from Carolyn Garbett and Joan Marker. I am aware of Janice Prince, Terry Bourne, Robbie Lapp and Judy McKee, the four founding grandmothers of the Gulf Coast Council. How did this council begin? Further back than the generous circle that co-created this event. Further back than the beautiful weavers each year before this. I want to know the history in a factual way. I want to trace the energy back, and back, and back-to Arizona, and to the name that I hear at every Council: Grandmother Mary Diamond.

Camp Beckwith, Alabama-February 19. At registration, each of us receives the booklet "Remembering Mary". I say YES! to this and YES! to all the other spirit-filled serendipity that weaves us together.

I felt awkward talking last night, as if my words were too fast, as if I wasn't sure which way to go, as if I wasn't being deeply true, or wasn't aware of what else I needed to say.

I was still settling in. I have to let the scraped down feelings of truth have their way, the way that water carves its way through rock.

Oh, how I miss Maya Levy's soft and lovely presence. I yearn to sit at Frieda Spaeth's feet, to touch her delicate skin, to weave our stories together. It is a great joy to see Mae Gabel, to talk with Verlie Barton. I am honored to be able to walk to the chapel with Juan Mengert. Edith Hinrichs tells me that she misses me. I find myself filled with tears and gratitude, and then I am fully here.

February 20. The Giveaway Ceremony is, for me, one of the most magical parts of the gathering. There were words and much that was beyond words.

February 21 Bobbie Goodman gives me a "Radical Prayer" book, not knowing the literal way that this connects to my Lenten focus on prayer. Sandra Parker and I jump into the bay. I share morning quiet on the pier with Penny Baker and two herons. I see Judy McKee and her sisters echo each other with postures and expressions. Helen Herring wears a Mardi Gras beaded cap. I am brought to tears (and envy) discussing sexuality with Stevi Gaston and Linda Guas.

February 22 I learn that if you room with JoEva Fletcher, you need lots of underwear for when you pee your pants laughing. I learn that Carolyn Garbett has a ladybug self. I learn that Sharon Spielmann has a vamp side and that Maizie Dalby is the cutest bumblebee ever. Sherril Arnold played the piano. Esther Kreek rocked the dulcimer.

I felt such power during drumming and from the owl wing feathers that sat on the open quilt of our sacred bundle. I was blessed by the open love of the entire circle of 42 women. I want you to know that you are woven in my heart.

March 24, 2008, Louisville, Kentucky. One morning my son eats cereal and blueberries out of a gold-rimmed bowl. This beloved bowl, with its intricate raised design, belonged to my grandma Lucille. It comes in to my mind that this bowl may be the thing I need to give away at next year's council.

#### The Temple...

#### ....The Square....

#### ....The Garden.....

#### .... . . . "A Feminine Tapestry"...

At the 2008 Gulf Coast Gathering, we encountered not only a full moon, but an eclipse! With these wonders, our 'old world' was eclipsed - we glimpsed the new world to come.

In the closing grand circle, each of the 42 grandmothers in attendance stood to express their personal 'shift' in how we each emerged as a different person. I wrote one word from each woman's tapestry of words as they wrapped us in love. Their words are presented in caps below, with minimal verbiage in low case to connect the dots and allow for flow.

Seeking d'Light(s)

Running Dove, Caroline Kane Krause

GENTLY we came,  
GRATEFUL in SPIRIT,  
Our PRAYERS, sent in SPEECHLESS GRATITUDE.

FULL VALIDATION EMERGED.  
We were ENRICHED.  
UNCONDITIONAL ENERGY let us WALK TALL.

ENCOURAGEMENT CONNECTED our  
HAPPY, FRAGILE, SPECIAL TAPESTRY.  
The SPLENDOR of it all HUGGED us.

To this ADVENTURE we shout YES!  
CIRCLE HOPPERS reveled in the FREEDOM.  
To express APPRECIATION, ACCEPTANCE...

THANK YOU, ANCIENT YOUTH,  
for sharing your POWER..  
for showing us HOPE...  
GIVING D'LIGHT to lift our WINGS... TO FLY.

#### DAY IS DONE

Traditional, new words: Velma Frye

Day is done. Gone the sun, from the lake,  
from the hills, from the sky.  
All is well. Safely rest, you and I. You and I.

Thanks and praise for our days, for our nights  
'neath the moon, 'neath of stars.  
As we go, this our prayer: Peace to all, near and far.

## Circle of Grandmothers



Word of our Gulf Coast Grandmother Juan Mengert passing came at 2:00 a.m. on Friday May 17, 2008. She listened intently to our written words to her, was able to smile and had recognition in her response when the sharing was completed. They were beautiful words and affirmations for her. Thank you all so much .

Her desire was to be cremated, and the spreading of the ashes was just family members, so there was no memorial service....but we've got another grandma who will be remembered and honored by our Spirit chair at the Council.. Love all around, Terry Bourne.

### O BEAUTIFUL DARKNESS

Macrina Wiederkehr, Velma Frye

The arms of darkness hold us,  
Revealing now how dear we are.  
O, beautiful darkness. O, comforting darkness.

Enfold us and hold us.  
Inform us, transform us.  
O, beautiful darkness. O, comforting darkness.

Surround us, all around us,  
And hold our light, like sky to star.  
O, beautiful darkness. O, comforting darkness.

## Spring by Lorraine Norrgard,

Noticing the subtle movements.....listening to the dripping icicles.....smelling the damp cool earthy air.....realizing....She is coming! One clue and then another- the shimmering March sun blows warm breath on the white snowy field, here and there, burning through, leaving patches of brown-a Sign! Everyone is excited and coming out to talk about Her coming- The red squirrel is telling everybody she knows, and the blue jay is telling the rest. The skunk has been waddling about undecided, but the mating eagles overhead know for sure. They follow the river looking for a good vantage point. It is soooooo exciting-She is coming! Anticipation fills the air. A fiddlehead fern is peeking out wondering if it is time to unfurl her spiral green. Yawning bears with growing stomachs will soon knock over my bird feeder in honor of Her coming. The rush is on to gather the flowing maple sap and giggles bubble with the sweetness. The ice broke up in the big lake. Today the first ship came into port, and everyone lined the channel waving and chanting, "We made it through!" There never was a doubt, yet the excitement of her coming refreshes the memory of where we have been. Sleeping and now waking up. She's almost here! I am listening to the ice dripping and shift to thoughts of rain. I shudder into wide awake.... imagining the return of the Thunder Beings..... the lightening shooting from their eyes and the blessings of spring rain again. She comes. Miigwech!



Arizona 2007

If you think this one was fun...

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Many Thanks! The Newsletter Team

Circle of Grandmothers Newsletter  
 2509 N. Campbell, #117  
 Tucson, AZ 85719

**News From The Councils**

**AZ Gathering**

**An Invitation from Arizona's Council of Grandmothers**

Good News!!! Plans for the 15th Annual Grandmother's Gathering in Arizona are underway! All the details are on the attached registration form. Remember, we are limited to 50 wonderful women so sign up early.

When: October 12 - 15, 2008

Where: Pocket Sanctuary in the beautiful Santa Cruz Valley near Tubac, Arizona - think magical mountains and expansive desert skies. Check it out: [www.pocketsanctuary.com](http://www.pocketsanctuary.com)

Our theme, "Self As Song - When the Grandmothers Speak The World Will Heal" will celebrate our unique connections to the Music of Life. In the safety of sacred space and loving companionship we'll relax into expressing our authentic Beingness. Our "*songs*" may take many forms: painting, reflective listening, loving, holding space for others, compassion in words or thought, drumming, spoken ideas, written creations, meditation, gardening, dancing, making music, loving the earth, activism, speaking, questioning or singing! Together

we will co-create and soak in the music of divine harmony.

Join us in discovering and demonstrating that "every poem, every prayer, every dance, every drum beat of the Grandmothers is a gift of permission for women as they mature..." Together we can raise the vibrations of the world! This 15th Council of Grandmothers will be a time for exploring the deeper truths of our guiding saying: "When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal. For more information please contact:

Bobbie Goodman, 520/751-3879, [allang97@hotmail.com](mailto:allang97@hotmail.com); AZ Weaver '08

Irene Walden, 520/795-0400, [iwalden@cox.net](mailto:iwalden@cox.net); AZ Treasurer '08

**From the United Kingdom**

**Greetings to the Grandmothers from the Hazeltree Council here in UK**

This is the first time in eight years that we haven't had a Spring Gathering. The last one in April 2007 was a great success and I had

hoped to hand over the role of Weaver to another woman. I felt that years at the helm were long enough and it was time to take a back seat. So we had a meeting after the gathering and what transpired was that most of the women felt they would like to go back to holding smaller, local gatherings in their own areas. So that is what has happened and it does feel right. Here in the Wells/Glastonbury group there are still 12 of us and we meet frequently and still keep in close touch with the other women in Dorset, Gloucester, etc. I also have regular visits with our original core-group Grandmothers. Next month we have arranged to have a day in the Bath Spa, a part of the Roman Baths which have been quite lavishly renovated. Togas and bowls of grapes all round!

I still look forward to hearing the Arizona news and would like to thank Kit for keeping me in touch all these years and look forward to staying with you via the newsletter now that Robbie is our Editor. And if anyone ever comes to the UK and would like to visit with us, we (there are 5 of our Grandmothers living in the house) would be delighted to see you.

Please do place all titles and addresses in all directions. I would love to hear from anyone who feels drawn to jot down a few words and keep me abreast of the events and news from 'over there!' And I really will try to be rather more communicative about our activities and thoughts here in beautiful Somerset.

Love,

May Lockwood

**From the Gulf Coast Council of Grandmothers**

We have just completed an uplifting and fun-filled gathering. We are now looking forward to our 10th Grandmothers Council next year and want to let all of you know that we have the dates for that gathering. Please mark your calendar and plan to join us here on the Gulf Coast next year...we will meet February 7-10, 2009 with early arrival on February 6th. We will be telling you more very soon. Hope to see you on the Gulf Coast in 2009! Carolyn Garbett, Phone 251/945-1295; [msharis98@gmail.com](mailto:msharis98@gmail.com).



**Circle of Grandmothers Newsletter**  
2509 N. Campbell, #117  
Tucson, AZ 85719

**Calendar of Council Gatherings and Newsletter  
'Bedlines'**

**Autumn Newsletter contents due:** August 20, 2008.

**Arizona Council Gathering:** October 12-15, 2008 with early arrival October 11.

**Winter Newsletter contents due:** October 20, 2008.

**Gulf Coast Council Gathering:** February 7-10, 2009 with early arrival February 6.

**Oklahoma-Texas Council Gathering:** May 6-9, 2009.

**Spring Newsletter contents due:** February 20, 2009.

**The Heartland Council circles** on the third Sunday of every month from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Contact Gracie Rogers at rogersmg@sbcglobal.net., (630) 510-8940

**Hazeltree Council, UK,** circles regularly. Contact May Lockwood at 4/77 Portway, Wells BA5 2BJ, United Kingdom, phone 01749 670009; e-mail [mavtimes60@hotmail.com](mailto:mavtimes60@hotmail.com).

**I LOOK INTO MY HEART**  
Macrina Wiederkehr, Velma Frye

I look into my heart for the wisdom,  
the wisdom,  
I look into my heart for the wisdom  
to live this day well.

I look into my heart for the wisdom,  
the wisdom,  
I look into my heart for the wisdom  
to end this day well.

