

# Circle of Grandmothers

Volume 12

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June 2006

## The Birth of a New Council

by Caroline Kane Krause

In April 2005 on Choctaw-Chicasaw land in Oklahoma, women from Oklahoma and Texas, with participation and support from the Arizona and Gulf Coast Councils, birthed the Oklahoma/Texas Council of Grandmothers and began planning their first gathering. That gathering took place over Mother's Day weekend on May 12-15, 2006 in Mead, Oklahoma. For their theme they created: The Intention-Come, Honor the Land and chose earth tones as their colors. The story of this first OK/TX Council gathering is told by Caroline Kane Krause.

Spirit settles me and I hear the Grandmother song – feel her touch my heart as She did in May in Mead at the planting of the seed of our OK/ TX Council. We gathered. Now, two weeks after that first Council gathering, the seed planted there stirs my heart still. Stirs – that's a good word. I am a word person (English, please) and I love that word. It fits the moments of the gathering like a glove; no other word does as well. We were ALL stirred. We could see it on the faces, in the eyes, in the lightness of being. We came there, many of us, as human doings, and found a way to *be*. We left as human beings.

This seeding gathering moved us into unfamiliar territory, as seeds are wont to do. The land we blessed, the waters we honored, shielded us from the outside world and wrapped around our collective Spirit with synergy rarely experienced in this material realm. It guided us gracefully to the other side and back. Grandmother Moon, full of Her glory, watched silently as we sang and danced. She smiled down upon us.

When Nonine called last summer to tell me of her vision of *the intention* and asked me to help weave this new fabric, I was gratified and overwhelmed, yet confused for months as I pondered her request to bring in the South with Owl. What a hoot! Everyone knows that Owl lives in the North with wisdom and mature majesty. Hoo ever heard of her coming in from the South?

That's the position of child!

Owl is my father's totem and has visited me many times in my life to give me a sign – a signal that all will be well if I stay to my path. Owl became my protection, one of my companions in my journey on this side. Now, in my 60th year of walking this road I will bring in the South (the direction of the child spirit) with Owl. It was breaking all the rules I thought I knew to bring Owl into the circle from the South. Then it hit me, even Owl was once a babe! How perfect it was then that we planted the seed of this first gathering out of order – that new order sprouted! New order did arrive that weekend of Mother's Day turning old perceptions and concepts upside-down!

Together we gently, solemnly, respectfully, joyfully and gracefully put into the circle all the angst and frets we so bravely carried through our lives to this place. We carried them for the waters as women have done for centuries; we carried them for the land, for Mother Earth, for Gaia, and we put them in the light of our collective Spirit and let them go. The observed is changed by the observation. The poison of all our angst was transmuted and a new way of seeing was born. As the veil lifted, our load was lightened. We were deLighted as we sang, danced, drummed and prayed the waters and the land back to life. The synergy stirred us to symbiosis. We were nurtured as we nurtured. Layers of angst were peeled away and we became. Each day we danced the Sacred Hoop. It is more than beautiful



when Grandmothers dance in circle, skirts flowing, arms and legs moving, lifting to join heaven and earth. No pictures were taken. None were needed. It is forever etched in my memory to carry me forth.

As in all Council gatherings I've attended over the last 10 years, last-minute changes that would have brought 'executives' to their knees were gently morphed into an entirely different form. The shifting and changing 'plan' worked better than our wildest dreams! And even our wildest dreams could not have prepared us for the wonder and energy of Sunday night's fire dance on Mother's Day.

A wise Grandmother told us later that the visions she had that night brought her whole life full circle in a spiral. As a small child she was pronounced dead from a crushing accident. She suddenly awoke, startled and full of life. She had a vision those many years ago of dancing feet around a fire, skirts flowing with the spin of the web of life. That night she realized it was *this* moment that reached its Hand back through the tunnel of time and pulled her forward to the *now*. This was the reason she lived, she now understood, so that tonight, when her Voice called to her, it found her. She came to us at that gathering as a new member, very shy and quiet. She left a new and full woman with a Voice. She will never be shy again! Hallelujah!

I want to thank so many wonder-full women: Carolyn, Reecie, and Elly who hosted us, fed us, nurtured us, housed us and loved us; Nonine, for the vision that spawned this wonder; Terry for bringing the magic of Gulf Shores to our Circle; Verlie, our youthful elder, and, Brenda, our wise youngest. I could go on listing them with honor until all twenty members are named, but they all know who they are and need no more mention than forever. It is the ALL of them that I honor for once again stepping my spirit up.

One month earlier I thought the Gulf Coast gathering could never be matched!

New Council cont. on page 7

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

## Poet's Corner

### New Moon Dream Time

The road lies long ahead of me  
turning and twisting, serpentine and dark.  
There is no light.

I feel my way with outstretched arms  
hands moving through air, marionette-like.  
But I'm unafraid of this darkness  
as something familiar and remembered  
moves me along.  
Some ancestral arm lies lightly across my shoulder.  
And a feminine whisper in my ear urges me  
with kindness, "come my dear".

I know this path. . .my soul has traveled  
along this very border tripping the light fantastic  
even as darkness cloaks me like a mourning shroud.  
I know this Place, this Midnight - Blue - Black  
terrine of lunar landscape.  
I have place-wisdom here.

This Stonehenge of ancient geoforms standing  
witness like old grandmothers steadfast in their  
watch I've rested here before while the earth  
spins on Her axis, kicking up angel dust in her  
big dance through the firmament.  
I've taken Sanctuary here among the  
Moonstones, luminescent against the dark breast of their  
mother.

I pick one up in celestial play and skim  
it across the heavenly sea, following it's  
pearly path toward infinity.

I climb, spent, into the generous lap  
of my New Moon Mother and breathe  
deeply of her dark ether.

Falling,  
Falling,  
Falling,

I Sleep a Secret Sleep

*Kathy Lietz, Pennsylvania*

## Editor's Corner

*By Kit Wilson*

I'm trying to be grateful for celery. First thing this morning I read an article on gratitude by Joan Borysenko. Short and cheerleader-y - nice wake-me-up ideas to start my day. I'm back on Weight Watchers (some things never change). This time I'm trying the new "core" program instead of counting points. There are only so many "core" foods and what you might not know about me is that I'm mildly "vegetable-phobic". On this food plan vegetables are a staple. Today it was celery sticks, strawberries, and non-fat yogurt for lunch. The celery leaves much to be desired. Thus the big challenge of the moment is changing my attitude.. So where, you might ask, is my spiritual backbone and my Andrew Weil education? And the truth is: During the first few days of a new food plan all that good stuff vanishes. For now the best I can do tell the celery, strings and all, how grateful I am for sacrificing itself to my well being. It's a start, anyway.

Lots of news this issue from the Gulf Coast and a great article from Carolyn about the launching of the Oklahoma/Texas Council. Thank you, all who contributed. Your efforts keep this Newsletter going and have strengthened our connections over the years. And that's what it's all about. Do read the brief status report on the Arizona Gathering from Gail Watts. And do respond ASAP if you are planning to be in Arizona in October.

The Rex Ranch is becoming a more and more popular retreat center and we don't want to lose our space.

The Dialogue Band worked hard on the enclosed Questionnaire. Be sure to give it your full attention and respond from your heart wisdom to the questions. The issues are those that have come up at our large Gatherings and in our small Circles. They are vital to all of us as a collective and it is important that we all have a voice in any decisions made.

Here in Phoenix it is 106 degrees outside. Shadow and I are swimming early every morning and then retreating into the air conditioning for the day. Heath has graduated from ASU and next week he leaves for Brazil for six months. Logan, my youngest grandson, turned 21 in May. I'm grateful today for all of my Grandmother buddies who understand that with each milestone for the younger generation there is the wistful recognition of our own inexorable "ripening".

Enjoy the Newsletter. Enjoy the summer wherever you are and whatever you are doing. Stay well. Stay in touch.

From our house, much love from John, Heath, Shadow, Whidbey, and Max. And, of course, from your Editor.



## AZ Council of Grandmothers 2006 - the 13th Year

The number "13" was special to Mary Diamond. Let's make this 13<sup>th</sup> gathering a **GREAT ONE!** Please get your registrations in as soon as possible -- deadline is July 7th!! If you're expecting to come, **DON'T DELAY!!**

We'll be meeting at Rex Ranch from October 1 through October 5 -- four nights and 5 days for \$440, **ALL INCLUSIVE**, including the hot tub this year!!

Our "Spirit at Work" theme should give you some great ideas to bring with you. And don't forget that our colors this year are turquoise, copper and white. So get your creative juices flowing and **GET READY TO HAVE FUN!!**

Questions? Call Gail Watts: 520-648-1825.

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# 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. *Compiled by Gracie Rogers.*

## An Interview with Anne Thode

*This interview reflects a change from past Grandmother Profiles in that it tells the story of a younger woman (52) who attended the Arizona Council of Grandmothers gathering for the first time in October 2005*

**Gracie Rogers:** *Let's start at the beginning: tell us about your early life.*

**Anne Thode:** I was born February 1, 1954 in Moline, Illinois, the fifth and last child of Josephine and Gail Johnson. One of my sisters (a middle child) is Kathie Murtey who has attended all of the Grandmother gatherings in Arizona since the second one, and was profiled in this newsletter in December 2004. As reported by Kathie, the brother we lost, the third child of three at the time, died in a car accident when he was 15 months old prior to our mother birthing my sister, Norma, and me. I grew up literally as the youngest of four girl children.

My oldest sister, Virginia, became a mother just prior to my second birthday and produced seven boys qualifying her as The Perfect Mom; Kathie holds the title of The First College Graduate and The One Who Moved Away, Norma was the all-time hot headed redhead in our teenage years and once she graduated from college achieved her title of The Most Perfect and Caring Teacher.

Growing up I considered only Kathie and Norma as rebellious, but I can see now that they were, in fact, growing into their individuality and independence as it was being modeled by our fiery Irish mother. Virginia and I, on the other hand, took after our mostly silent, but strong Swedish father. As the baby of the family, with everyone else older and having higher status, I quickly learned to do what I was told to do. There wasn't much new ground for me to break anyway. I was unable to see a role that I could fill so I became servant-like. I attempted to perform any task possible so as not to be noticed. I didn't openly challenge or question much and am still comfortable functioning this way today although that is beginning to change. Even though it has taken me years to find my voice, now when I feel confident enough to make my self known I can take a strong stand and fight for the things I believe in.

**GR:** *What is the most important thing you want us to know about you?*

**AT:** That's easy. I feel I'm just becoming aware of me, my thoughts, my needs my wants, my sensuality.

Some might refer to that as blossoming and growing from my soul rather than my intellect, but I disagree. I've had an "old soul" ever since I can remember. It was the rest of me, my intellect and personal identity, which I didn't own until sometime after I turned 40. I'm actually just now entering my *first* adulthood when many of my peers are entering their second. I'm allowing myself to be, to be in the moment, with the result that I'm learning that valuable tool -- mindfulness. For years I was non-existent or lived in the shadow of others. Once in a while though, even in childhood, I had an occasional outburst of independent resistance, but those times were few and short in duration so they didn't help me grow.

From the age of 13, I worked part-time for my father, beside or behind Norma in our Dad's music store and hated every minute



*Anne Thode*

of it. As the owner's daughters, my sister and I were expected to dress appropriately; you know, we had an image to maintain, when in truth we were required to dust the instruments and shelves in the store, sweep floors, and clean the windows and toilets regularly. I'd love to say I learned all about the hierarchical double standard during those years, but that isn't true. I wasn't aware of anything like hierarchy, didn't need to be, everyone else did that for me. I just floated meaninglessly through life. The only thing I was aware of was sadness in others, sometimes complete strangers. Not the normal sadness but the kind that breaks down a person's soul -- I felt it because it was part of me, too!

After muddling through resistance to parental restrictions in my teenage years, I remember looking forward to college - to the

opportunity to live in a dorm and be truly independent for the first time. Ha! I only completed my freshman year because life in the dorm felt so dangerous. I loved to study and attend classes but the drugs, alcohol, parties, and boys in such large numbers frightened me to death. Everything was much too scary for this girl who had attended a private all girls' school since fourth grade graduating with my HUGE class of 16. In my naiveté I thought marriage would be safer so that was my next escape attempt. In 1973 I married, and within five years had two children, a daughter born on my 21st birthday and my son when I was 24. They are now 31 and 28 respectively.

**GR:** *How does your early history sit with you today?*

**AT:** Actually, I'm more at peace with it now than I've ever been, and it makes me happy; not just to be able to say that but to feel happy. I see that my life experiences taught me survival skills until I was able to accept responsibility for myself. When I was young I was unable to give myself permission to make choices on my own behalf. I always ended up in (put myself into) situations that forced me to make the choice for survival because it was the only one I thought I had. I went to college to survive my upbringing; I married to get safely away from my campus environment; once married, I went to work so we could survive financially and, of course, because my husband expected me to work. So, I worked. Oh, I honed my survival skills all right!

**GR:** *What are you doing now and what are your future plans?*

**AT:** This September I will be employed by the same company for 33 years and am getting closer to the time when I will no longer have to work for financial reasons. I work in the information technology field doing systems analysis for an insurance company. Unofficially, I supervise 25 people. I am invited to "attend" corporate committee meetings and occasionally allowed to actually become a committee member. I do get satisfaction from my work and the interaction with people it provides, but I'm beginning to see that it's no longer enough.

In the future, I'd like to develop and/or work in a program that provides a safe haven for young women who find themselves in the difficult life situation of an unwanted preg-

*Anne Thode cont. on page 7*

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

# Report from the Gulf Coast Grandmother April Gathering...

by Carolyn Garbett

Well, we looked forward for a whole year to the gathering that took place April 18-21. Now it is forever in our memories and I feel that it went too quickly. Our Gathering was attended by 32 Grandmothers and some really special new women came for the first time. Most said they would be back next year... pretty awesome, huh!

Janice Prince, our weaver, did a superb job and really brought our theme "Color Me Human, Color Me Whole" to life. Her presentation of the "13 Original Clan Mothers" also added to our knowledge enrichment... We even made personalized dolls using the colors for our place on the wheel.

Terry Bourne gracefully led a very informative Fire Ceremony with teachings that were clear

and well researched. Regrettably, we had to fight the bugs at all our outdoor events.

Lorraine Norrgard taught us about her culture with both the Ancient Gifting Tradition and the Gifting of the Medicine Bundle to our Council. When we opened the bundle

and the feathers were whisked down each of us we could feel Spirit blessing us all.

The Giveaway, (one of my favorite parts), the Elder Circle, Ceilidh and the Morning Meditations also added "texture" to the gathering.

Of course, the Small Circles are the meat of any gathering. Facilitators practiced and were really able to incorporate the theme with the Circle. Spirit always takes over and the result is Magic.

So there you have it....it was wonderful, and we already have our date for next year, April 1-4. We are considering adding another day, but won't know for sure until after the first planning circle in early June.

Now I can begin to look forward to 2007. I can hardly wait!



## A Family Fairy Tale

By Gracie Rogers

Once upon a time a baby boy was born in a bustling and beautiful city. His mother named him Gabriel because she felt he was a gift from Heaven. This little boy had great big brown eyes and he watched everyone and everything very intently from the moment he arrived on earth. He seemed in a hurry to grow up -- weighing 25 pounds and walking by the time he was nine months old. He played, he explored, he climbed - in fact his family called him little monkey because by the time he was four he could shimmy to the top of doorways, a leg on each side of the frame. It soon became clear to his mom that he did all these things because he loved to laugh. And laugh he did.

The little boy grew into a typical wild teenager - drove his mother nutty as most teens do, but also, she noticed, loved little children, which was unusual for a young male going through puberty. When Gabriel turned 21 he decided it was time he left the protection of his safe home nest and strike out on his own. He moved to a place far away and began the search to find himself. It didn't go easily the first five years or so. He was a legal adult now, he could buy a beer, do what he wanted, go where he wanted. And, as you might expect

he tested the waters. Fortunately, he didn't drown.

Eventually, in this new land where he had settled, he met his future wife. She was a lovely young woman who also had great big eyes. Their two big pairs of eyes saw much in each other so they fell in love and got married. Life was good. They both worked hard and soon bought their first little house. And, before you could turn around a baby was on the way. The nine months passed quickly and they were blessed with a beautiful little boy; he too had great big brown eyes.

Time went on and when this second little boy with the great big eyes was two years old his dad, Gabriel, and his mom, Naomi, had a beautiful little girl. She had great big blue eyes! Now these parents really had their hands full, but since family was the most important thing to both of them, they were happy. However, as his children grew, Gabriel began once again to feel an old longing - a longing he had felt all of his life. He wanted to find his dad. His mom and dad had dated years ago, separated before he was born, and his mom had raised him alone.

One night Gabriel called his mom and

asked for whatever information she could give him about his father. It wasn't much because it had been over 30 years since she had seen the man. Gabe went ahead anyway and put the information he had into his magic computer machine and ja-zaam! within 48 hours he had found where his father lived and had the phone number. With shaking hands Gabriel dialed the number. He was very nervous and very excited. A man answered the phone and in a brief but, it turned out, prophetic 15-minute conversation the two strangers became father and son. His father was thrilled and opened his heart to this son he didn't know he had. Gabe learned he wasn't an only child, that he had three half-brothers and two half-sisters. He had in-laws and nieces and nephews; an uncle, and even a wonderful, loving grandmother! He was overwhelmed and overjoyed.

Very quickly old connections were reconnected and arrangements made for a family reunion. A few months later Gabriel, his mother, and one of his half-brothers who, it turned out lived fairly close to his mom, took a short drive north and on a sunny Saturday

Family Fairy Tale cont. on page 7

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

# Council of Grandmothers Dialogue Survey/Questionnaire

*Offered by the Dialogue Band*

As you read in the March 2006 Circle of Grandmothers newsletter, the Dialogue Band invites you to participate in this survey intended to help guide the growth of The Council of Grand-mothers. From Mary Diamond's first calling of the Grandmothers in 1994, we have grown into a loosely woven community of elder women participating in four independent councils across the U.S. As gatherings were held, what happened at them evolved into who we are and what we do today. The intention for this survey is to hear from you, the Grandmothers, about how you see the Council growing and how you think we should support that growth.

All of the women who receive this survey via the newsletter and/or e-mail are requested to respond by August 4, 2006. You may respond by e-mail to [gmcouncil@aol.com](mailto:gmcouncil@aol.com) or send by regular mail to: The Circle of Grandmothers, c/o the Dialogue Band, 2320 Westminster St., Wheaton, IL 60187. Your responses will be collated and printed in a subsequent newsletter and sent to you by e-mail if you request. Copies also will be available at the Arizona gathering in October. Your responses to this survey will direct how this dialogue continues.

1. What drew you to participate in the Grandmothers Council and what is most important to you about this community?

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2. What is important to you about elder wisdom, conscious aging and world healing?

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3. Would you advise all four existing Councils of Grandmothers (AZ, Gulf Coast, Heartland, OK/TX) to formally adopt the PeerSpirit circling format that is currently being used – sacred center, talking piece, guardian, timekeeper, check-in, heart round, check-out?

*Discussion: It is important to note that PeerSpirit is the only form of circle that uses a guardian. The value of a stated circle format ensures that any Grandmother who attends a large gathering knows in advance what to expect and will be familiar and comfortable during that Council event. This is an aspect of protecting our Council environment.*

4. Would it be helpful to you personally for The Council of Grandmothers to have a secure, password protected website? And, if so, why?

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4a. Would you be willing to be a subscriber to get this website in operation? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

4b. Are you open to assisting and what abilities have you to share to help this site become a reality?

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*Discussion: Uses for this type of website can include, but are not limited to, communications between Councils, individual Council activities, and contacts for each Council or activity. The website could be supported via subscription much the same way the newsletter is supported.*

*Survey/Questionnaire cont. on page 6*



**Anne Thode cont. from page 3**

nancy. I'll need to learn more street wisdom to be able to relate to some of the women in this situation. However, I am an excellent listener and will know when they need to work through their own thoughts and emotions even though they are being bombarded by others who claim to "know what is good for them". I feel very strongly that listening is being taught less and less. The world can't afford to have everyone only speaking. I know I can make a difference; especially I can make a difference in the lives of women who don't yet know their value. It is a wondrous experience to be able to see that the skills I developed in response to my life situations are now leading me to explore avenues of possibility for furthering my spiritual quest.

*GR: We know you connected with the Council of Grandmothers through your sister Kathie. What impact did attending your first Arizona gathering have on you?*

AT: Well, let me first say, I arrived without

any expectations. That's a lie! I wanted to go skinny dipping with the Grandmothers! (*Ed. Note: the heated outdoor hot tub was out of commission.*) But other than that I had none beyond the privilege of sharing and observing what makes my sister happy. However, upon returning to the Midwest from my first Grandmother's Council I realized that in my small circle I had let go of an intense, debilitating, life altering sadness. It was a sadness that left me in complete darkness; a sadness that turned the only part of me I knew well and accepted into a very small sidewalk puddle, one everyone walks through, oblivious to its existence. I had lost something very precious and the women in my small circle helped me let go of the pain. I began to live again. These Grandmothers helped me to get back on track, to find my voice, to find me! I felt every woman – past, present and future – were a part of me again. I wasn't alone nor would I ever be again. The women in my small circle continue to give me strength ev-

eryday since. I'm back to not just surviving but living. Wow, simply... Wow!

*GR: As a young Grandmother, what wisdom would you like to hear from the elder Grandmothers?*

AT: This may sound too simplistic, but it is my truth. I want to hear what it is they *need heard*: a life story, or lesson they feel needs to be shared, whether it's the first telling or the millionth. And, if the telling isn't to heal them maybe it's to heal me. Thanks for asking me these questions; I'm honored. Blessings on your day.

P.S. Anne would love to hear from any Grandmother(s) with experience in starting or working in a local program for unwed mothers. Anne can be contacted at home at amthode@att.net or 563-391-8911.



**Family Fairy Tale cont. from page 4**

afternoon a new family was born. Gabriel spent the day in a state of wonder. They all looked at lots of each other's baby pictures and family photos, and they took new ones. They had a picnic and Gabe and one of his new brothers played guitar together. That night they built a bonfire and sat around it for hours sharing stories and building new relationships.

The tale doesn't end there. By the end of the family reunion weekend, Gabriel was told that his parents were a couple again. When he was able to catch his breath and speak he learned that his mom and dad had been sharing their stories over the phone since he had reintroduced them a few months back. Both of them had been alone for many years and were comfortable with spending the rest of their lives that way. But, something unexpected happened; a spark was rekindled. After 30 plus years, an old love was reborn. Gabriel's mom and dad discovered they had followed very similar spiritual paths, that they shared similar histories and thought the same about all the important things in life. They even figured out the things that had prophesized their reunion.

Needless to say, everyone involved in this family fairy tale went through myriad feelings of surprise, curiosity, joy, and gratitude. While all the very young children in this newly formed family weren't aware of what had happened, their lives and the lives of their parents were forever changed because one little boy, who grew up without his dad, became a dad himself and needed to close his family circle. And so he did.

Now as you all know, fairy tales aren't true. Or are they? It turns out that this one is. Gabriel is my son and his children, are my grandchildren. His father and I are one again and will spend the rest of our days together on this lovely planet we all call home. What is the moral of this fairy tale story? Perhaps it is about trusting. Trusting that all of life is good, that we can grow from all the choices we make, and from everything that happens to us. And, remembering that love truly does make the world go around. Oh, and don't forget to always look back over your shoulder. You never know what is coming toward you!

THE END



**New Council cont. from page 1**

But, every gathering I've attended from Arizona to Alabama to Oklahoma grows me in intensity and I float back to this material world a lighter person every time; changed from a human doing to a human being.

These past 10 years of circle have grown me in other ways as well. Fretting is no longer an option. Seeking deLight(s) is now my e-mail mantra, my life mantra. With this incredible lightness of being, and the wonderful vision of retrospect, I see how chaos was braided, twisted, danced and tied into a web of beauty and strength. A safety net weaved itself around us. We grew. We grew individually and now we grow together. Our hearts stirred. We will never be the same as we were before the transformation. We transmuted the poisons of our lives and were nurtured by the manna. Once the cake is baked the egg will never be the same. We are Spirit Seekers now. The OK / TX Grandmother's Council has *become*. Namasté.



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