



## Living the Dream: Letter from the Editor

by Anne Newkirk Niven

*You cannot hedge your bets with love.*  
— Chandra Alexander

I believe that our children teach us who we really are, in a way that nothing, or no one, else can do. But there is a price: if any of us truly understood what being a parent would require of us before we began, the human race would have died out millennia ago. For who would willingly open up her most tender, vulnerable and secret places to the heart-stopping rawness of this one-way street, this leap into nothingness, this tango with the unknowable, that is motherhood?

I had a foreshadowing of how utterly dangerous motherhood could be from my experiences nurturing three younger siblings (and both of my parents) during my tumultuous childhood. That's why, by my twenty-fifth year, I had thoroughly determined that I was *never* going to have children. Responsibility for the health and welfare of another human being, who would forever be vulnerable to all the dangers and vicissitudes of life; who may (or may not) give me love and affection in return; who could utterly forsake me and yet to whom I would have an eternal bond? It sounded like the perfect recipe for complete exposure to the universe and — I might add — a really excellent way to drive myself over the edge. "Thanks, but no thanks," I concluded to myself, "I've had quite enough crazy-making caregiving for one lifetime, thank-you-very-much."

Of course, that was when Life stepped in and showed me who was boss. I fell in love with a man who was seeking a woman to marry and start a family with. All my fantasies of control, crenelated fortifications against the unexpected, and protestations of self-sufficiency melted away like cotton candy in a down-pour. Here, I rationalized, was a way to be safe *and* allow my nurturing instincts to blossom. I would become a mother — but with backup. I unclenched my heart, took a deep breath, and within three months of our wedding, Alan and I were expecting. "What," I fantasized, flying high on a heady combination of post-nuptial endorphins and pregnancy hormones, "could possibly go wrong?" Ah, as Puck said in *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, "what fools these mortals be."

As I soon discovered, even the most mundane experience of parenthood is fraught with equal parts of terror and joy. My husband Alan and I are the parents of three sons, each posing unique challenges. Many times I have been pushed beyond my boundaries, causing me to wonder if I was truly up to this seemingly impossible task. The answer, so far, has been "yes" — an answer I have earned, day by unpredictable day, by placing myself in the path of every accident, misadventure and catastrophe known to long-suffering humanity — and to every triumph, glory and miracle that the world is able to pour into my overflowing heart.

To be a mother, in my experience, means constantly learning and relearning how to distinguish between myself and my children. Setting boundaries — between their triumphs and tragedies and my own — has been my biggest challenge, and one that has grown along with them. All three of our children are gifted with unusual abilities, and challenged by learning and social differences which has made my job as a mother more satisfying and highly-charged than I counted on.

Our eldest, Arthur, landed his first "real job" this summer (jobs being as rare as hen's teeth in our tiny coastal village). Each day as I drive him out to the Point Arena Lighthouse (where he gives incredibly detailed tours to incredulous tourists) I find myself wondering anew where the last nineteen years could possibly have gone. How did the tiny babe that dozed on my breast in the sun on the living room floor; the third-grade outcast wandering forlornly around the school playground with only his trusty pencil for company; the angry young teenager struggling with his diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome blossom into this well-spoken, confident writer, scholar and young man? The more poignant question I face — as Arthur is about to embark on his college career six hundred miles away in Oregon — is how will I handle the daily absence of my dear friend, whose rapier wit and encyclopedic intellect has honed my mind and expanded my horizons as he has grown into his prime?

Our middle son, Aidan, has posed an entirely different set of challenges. From birth on, he has faced physical challenges — newborn jaundice, severe asthma and allergies — that caused him (and me) untold anxiety and stress. But with these struggles have come gifts of empathy, awareness and a passion for justice that makes Aidan an unusual sixteen-year-old. I just got off the phone with him after he graduated from an unexpectedly rigorous experience at a law enforcement career summer camp, and I intuit that this encounter with militarism may have unanticipated side effects that his instructors couldn't have imagined. (For one thing, I'm pretty sure he'll never sign up for the Marines!) As Aidan continues to mature, I find myself increasingly pleased to have hatched such a self-directed person, and wistfully ponder the fact that he, too, will be leaving our nest in only two short years.

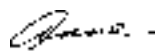
Our youngest son, Andrew, now twelve is tentatively entering adolescence. Having grown up in the long shadow of his charismatic and strong-willed brothers, Andrew is just beginning to display his own personality. Quirky and opinionated, he is fascinated by video games and computers; his joint project with Alan this summer has been learning web design software (a subject I find utterly incomprehensible). At times shy, even withdrawn, due to speech and sensory issues, I'm gratified to see Andrew showing greater confidence of late. I know that he will miss his brothers' loving (if often rough-and-tumble) mentoring as he moves out into the world without their protective cover, and I have taken as one of my jobs the task of becoming more involved in his interests. (I'm even trying to learn to play video games, though I'm hopelessly inept compared to him!)

I've been told (sometimes with well-meaning sympathy, at other times with genuine spite) that I can't really understand the Goddess because I have no daughters. I can't speak to that, since I have almost no experience in mentoring young women. But I have to believe that the Goddess knew what she was doing when she gave me only boys to mother.

One thing I *do* know: becoming a mother has brought out my fiercest, most protective instincts. My experience of mothering has been more about battles won (and occasionally, lost) than about being warm, fuzzy, and nurturing. (Though I'm never one to turn down a hug!) I love our boys with unabashed intensity and would literally give my life for any one of them. (Wouldn't every mother?)

I positively swelled with pride when my friend (and former charter school principal) told me over a cup of tea recently, "No one fights for her children like you do, Anne. It's like facing a mother Grizzly Bear to see you across a table when the welfare of your sons is at stake." Although most of those battles have been on behalf of our sons, some have actually been *with* them (I'm known as the "toughest mom in the neighborhood" when it comes to issues like curfews), and still others have been struggles with my own limitations (such as anxiety and depression). But the struggles have been worth it, and in fact, being a mother has been the greatest adventure of my life. I wouldn't change that for the world.

Blessed Be,



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## Editorial Notes

We encourage all Goddess-loving women to write for *SageWoman*. Most of our articles come from our readers! *SageWoman* accepts non-fiction submissions from women only, while *PanGaia* and *newWitch* accept both fiction and non-fiction from all genders. Our new magazine *Crone: Women Coming of Age* will debut in Spring 2008 and will accept material from women 49+ years of age.

Please submit *SageWoman* articles directly to Anne Newkirk Niven; via email (preferred) to: editor2@sagewoman.com. By postal mail, send submissions to our main address: SageWoman, P. O. Box 641, Point Arena, CA 95468.

### #74, "Surrender & Awakening" Deadline Nov. 1, '07

*Sometimes our attempts to hold on, to control, to manage, to plan our lives simply cannot stand up to the forces that overwhelm us. Sometimes we simply have to accept our limitations, and stop fighting, if only for a moment. Paradoxically, it is sometimes true that the moment of surrender is the opening necessary for unexpected transformations to occur. Please share your stories of what happens in your life when you just "let go, and let Goddess."*

### #75, "The Wheel of the Year" Deadline Feb. 1, '08

*The cycle of the seasons is one of the most intimate connections we have with the cycle of the natural world. In this issue, please share your experience with the changing patterns of weather, light, climate, vegetation, human and animal life that make up the kaleidoscope that is the Wheel of the Year.*

### Coming soon

#78: *Giving and Receiving*  
#79: *Beginnings*  
#80: *Longing and Desire*