



Living the Dream: Letter from the Editor

by Anne Newkirk Niven

*We are the flow, we are the ebb.
We are the weavers, we are the web...*
Shekinah Mountainwater

This issue marks the 25th anniversary of *SageWoman* and I pray that it will not be her last. But that, truly, is in the hands of the Goddess — and in yours.

The news of the bankruptcy and liquidation of the Borders bookstore chain (resulting in a \$12,000 gap in *SageWoman's* cashflow) rocked me back on my heels just as I was finishing this issue. Within two weeks, the news that the venerable Goddess magazine *The Beltane Papers* (which I once considered *SageWoman's* mentor and “big sister” title) was ceasing publication, and that the UK magazine *Goddess Pages* was being forced to go digital-only (no paper version) reemphasized my sense of peril. However, after a few days of panic I remembered that you, our readers, have rescued *SageWoman* once before (after the collapse of newsstand distributor Fine Print in 1997) and I believe that such a miracle can happen again. In fact, it is already beginning to happen, thanks to an e-mail campaign that we launched about two weeks ago.

SageWoman has always been about digging deeper — deeper into our connections with each other, with the natural world, and with the Goddess Herself — so the fact that these two events (an amazing anniversary and a momentous financial crisis) have occurred simultaneously shouldn't surprise me. As the saying goes, “it's always darkest before the dawn.”

In this case the “dark” — the aforementioned cashflow crunch — is a financial, not an existential crisis. It's not as if our readers have deserted us; indeed, not a week goes by (some weeks, not even a *day*) when one of our readers doesn't reach out to say how much *SageWoman* means to her. Recently these missives have taken a distinctly pleading tone, often expressed in three short-but-eloquent words. “*Anne*,” the reader says earnestly to me, “*Please don't stop*.” Such entreaties go straight to my heart.

When I first discovered *SageWoman* #5 (“Initiations & Transformations”) in a Santa Rosa bookstore in 1988, the magazine seemed written especially for me. I was twenty-eight year years old and had only recently undergone my own transformation from a card-carrying Christian to a dewy-eyed Goddess devotee. I was also newly-orphaned (both my mother and father had died in the previous two years) and *SageWoman* reached right up off the shelf and into my soul.

Soon *SageWoman* became my primary connection to the Goddess movement and as her editor I've consciously strived to make this magazine a safe haven from (in Hamlet's phrase) “this sea of troubles.” *SageWoman's* current fiscal crisis has thrown me off balance, so, like generations of witches before me, I have turned to the natural world for guidance. And, I must say, the last few days have been so replete with omens that my divinatory senses are quite overstimulated.

The first omen came courtesy of our cat Zillah. A first-rate mouser, four days ago she appeared at my door with her usual trophy and demanded that I let her into the house. (Usually I make her leave her prey outdoors.) I complied (who could say “no” to that face?) but after parading around a bit, she discarded the mouse on the floor. When I went to dispose of the body a few minutes later; the mouse had disappeared, so I concluded that it had revived and made its getaway. (It's happened before.)

Later that afternoon I went to the laundry room to fold my clean clothes when what should I find nestled among my unmentionables than the missing mouse, quite dead. Even more disconcerting, I soon realized that this mouse was heavily pregnant, her belly literally bulging with her (now stillborn) babies. Although I'm not usually squeamish about dead mice (that's why we got the cat, after all) this gave me a shudder. But after a moment I shrugged, matter-of-factly tossed the dead mama mouse into the deep leaf litter of our forested backyard, and went back to my day.

The second sign showed up late that night when Arthur woke me to report that there was a skunk trapped in the window well of the basement bedroom. Sure enough, downstairs I discovered a very unhappy polecat pacing back and forth a few feet above his headboard. Unable to deal with this bizarre event at 2 a.m., I tipped one end of a 2-by-4 into the well in hopes that the skunk would crawl up it to freedom and went back to bed.

The next morning, I wandered downstairs and peered through the window; seeing nothing, I believed that the skunk had escaped. But that night the skunk was back, or more precisely, it had never actually left. As it turned out, it was a baby skunk — a skunk *kitten* — so tiny that when faced with the light of day (skunks are nocturnal) it had rolled up in a ball in a corner and fallen asleep, effectively invisible. Now I felt responsible for a helpless baby (skunk kits can't spray) which had been trapped without food or water for a night-and-a-day.

As I looked at the kit shivering in the chill night air, I wasn't sure how much longer it would last. So I suited up in full motorcycle gear (complete with helmet) and climbed gingerly into the well, intending to lift it to safety. I quickly realized that the space was too small for me to crouch down and reach the kit, which by now had dug deep into the dirt bottom of the well, leaving only its tail visible. I retreated, resigned to providing comfort in the form of some old rags and a handful of fresh cherries, built a more substantial ladder of cardboard boxes (Alan's idea) and retired for the night. Happily, the next morning it quickly became apparent that the kit had finally escaped, much to our relief.

But the third (and most potent) portent was saved for last. Our suburban home borders a green-space with a year-round stream and every summer since we moved here we have spotted more wildlife. Two afternoons ago Alan noticed a raccoon mother and her two youngsters (like skunk babies, called kits) traipsing across our yard. This was unusual, but not extraordinary. Then the mama raccoon discovered the corpse of the pregnant mouse I had unceremoniously discarded only the day before. With great enthusiasm mama raccoon took a bite, then divided the remainder between her eager offspring.

This incident floored me: the whole "circle of life" couldn't have been more obvious if Simba had walked up to my window and done a song-and-dance from *The Lion King*. But what could it possibly *mean*?

Another night has passed; four days in total since the triplet of auguries began. Upon reflection, I have decided that the message is one of radical acceptance of the will of the Goddess. She has matters firmly in hand, though not necessarily in ways that I find palatable. Although through my actions — introducing a new cat to my neighborhood, living in a house with an open window well, providing an escape hatch for a trapped skunk kit — I may influence the course of events, it is apparent that I do not control them.

This revelation resonates with my intuition about our current fiscal crisis; although we have already taken decisive action to replace the lost Borders revenue, our efforts alone cannot possibly suffice to bridge this temporary cash shortfall. A successful fund-raising campaign (see details at www.sagewoman.com/donate) will put us back into the black, reinvigorated to continue our work into the next quarter-century.

Thank you for supporting this Goddess-loving community for twenty-five years. I look forward to continuing to serve the Goddess, and you, for twenty-five more.

Namaste,



P. S. So far, we have raised just over \$5,000 of our \$12,000 goal. To help, please use the form inserted in this issue to donate to our Rebound Fund. Thank you for your generous support.

ANNE NEWKIRK NIVEN is the Editor of *SageWoman*, *Witches&Pagans*, and *Crone* magazines. She, her husband Alan, and their three sons Arthur, Aidan, and Andrew, make their home in Forest Grove, Oregon.

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 *Witches&Pagans* accepts both fiction and non-fiction from all genders. *Crone: Women Coming of Age* accepts material from women 49 years of age and older. *SageWoman* articles are primarily first-person spiritual narratives from a woman's perspective; please query the editor if you wish to submit outside of that style.

Please submit *SageWoman* articles directly to Anne Newkirk Niven; via email (preferred) to: editor2@bbimedia.com. By postal mail, send submissions BBI Media, P. O. Box 687, Forest Grove, OR 97116.

#83 NEW TITLE "Sanctuary." (Previously "Protection.")

NEW Deadline Nov. 1, 2011

What makes you feel safe? How have you sheltered others, and what (or who) has sheltered and protected you? We are especially looking for your stories of self-empowerment and for practical methods (mundane or magical) of keeping ourselves and our loved ones safe in an often chaotic, even violent world.

#84 "Women & Men"

Deadline Feb 1, 2012

All of us women have to deal with men. For some, our family members (or even friends) may be men; for others we may choose to connect with men as little as possible. In this issue, please share your perspective on relationships with men (not systems of patriarchy but person-to-person) as it relates to the Goddess and your spiritual path.

Coming Soon:

#85: *Herbal Magick*

#86: *Renewal & Rebirth*

#87: *Serenity*