



Living the Dream: Letter from the Editor

by Anne Newkirk Niven

You become a Crone when someone else says that you are because they recognize it in you. It's not something that you recognize in yourself.

— De-Anna Alba

Am I a “Wise Woman?” This central question, coming hard on the heels of our successful “Borders Rebound” campaign (see editorial, issue 81) has forced me to confront a number of challenging ideas that have been swirling around in my head ever since August. That’s when — confronting the massive cash flow gap which caused us to have to appeal to our readers in order to continue publishing — I had to face what my life would look like without *SageWoman*.

My interview in January on Karen Tate’s internet radio program “Voices of the Goddess” further hammered home the point. One of her questions jolted me awake in the inimitable way that only the Voice of Goddess does. “You’ve just spoken about all the Pagan magazines you’ve seen come and go. Why do you think *SageWoman* is still alive?”

The answer to that question (which Karen hadn’t vetted in advance) came naturally to my lips. “*SageWoman* is still alive because She is unique in the world. It’s certainly not me: not my editing or design skills, or business acumen or anything else. It’s *SageWoman* Herself — this is a safe, welcoming place where we can share our authentic Goddess stories with each other. *That* is the reason *SageWoman* is still around.”

I finished the interview feeling refreshed and invigorated. It was such a relief to realize — in that way that our internal truths gel when they are voiced out loud — that the magic of *SageWoman* was not just about me. The undeniable fact is that I act as a conduit, a channel, at most, a weaver, of the wonderful strands of women’s wisdom that are shared in these pages. Whew! (Deep sigh of relief.)

Having realized gratefully that I am not *SageWoman*’s mommy but rather Her midwife still left hanging that original vexing issue however: am I a “sage” woman, and, if so, what does it actually mean to be “wise?”

The reason these two subjects — my relationship with *SageWoman* and my worthiness to be considered a Sage/Crone — are so interwoven is that *SageWoman* is almost certainly my life’s work, and I know it.

It’s rather tricky to know in the here-and-now that when I die, if anyone besides my family notes my passing, the name *SageWoman* will probably be linked to mine. (Hey, I’m not being morbid here; one of the more poignant aspects about coming into cronehood is realizing that you are closer to your obituary than to your birth announcement.)

The part that’s difficult about this realization is that it is both a sly temptation to pride and a distraction from *the work itself* to consider one’s legacy. (Anyone else notice that public figures seem to make their most foolish mistakes when they start obsessing about their “place in history?”)

To make matters more complex, I’ve been a bit of a “know-it-all” since I was old enough to talk. Conflict was so deeply-embedded in my family’s life that being the resident “expert” on almost any subject was a straightforward survival skill, not to mention a valuable source of ego-strokes. That artifice worked well in my childhood, but it left me with a persistent distrust in my own judgement. Whatever the subject of my (now-adult) expertise, I still harbor the disquieting suspicion that I’m “making it up” as I go along: just like when I was doing my parent’s income taxes for them at the age of twelve.

So today, I find the question of whether the experience of spending half my lifespan working on a magazine with a synonym for “wise” in its very title has resulted in any discernment of my own to be deeply ironic. At worst, I feel like an out-and-out fraud: after all, shouldn’t the editor of such a magazine be a veritable fountainhead of sagacity?

Thankfully, following my epiphany during Karen’s show, I’ve concluded that I can admit to possessing at least a little of the insight that I so deeply long for without setting up shop as a charlatan. Among the traits I am willing to acknowledge in myself is a sharp eye for veracity (and conversely, a good nose for sniffing out baloney); a modicum of understanding of how the Divine weaves *Itself* into our lives; and, most importantly, an acute ear for listening to and sharing the unique stories of Goddess-loving women.

There's two more sagacious traits that I'm willing to claim: honesty and compassion. Honesty, as it is said, is the best policy, but knowing how to utilize it can be tricky, especially when working with the writers and artists who share their creativity in these pages. Compassion, I've found, is the essential counterpoint to a tendency towards "brutal" candor, and I've gotten much better at steering submissions toward alternative markets, requesting rewrites, or just being gentle in my rejection letters. As I've improved as an editor, I've found that nurturing nascent writers — especially those with overly-academic voices in need of emotional freedom or enthusiastic storytellers who can use a nip of narrative restraint — to be an unadulterated pleasure.

Such happy virtues don't shield me from the temptation to inflate my self-importance. Customers phone up all the time — to renew, subscribe, or ask "where's my issue?" — and then go all weak-kneed when they realize they are talking to the "Editor" rather than some nameless drone. Such a juicy opportunity to preen! Fortunately, they often proceed to ask me if I write all the articles (or even, if I draw all the artwork.) Instant deflation! My rueful explanation that such a thing would be patently impossible probably leaves callers wondering what I actually *do* for a living, but I have the satisfaction of knowing that I'm not pulling any "man behind the curtain" tricks on our readers.

Such ego-balancing machinations never used to be necessary, but these days I'm finding them increasingly relevant. Even though I have shared some of my most intimate emotional struggles with readers in these pages, I have never felt like a "celebrity" nor considered myself to be a "Pagan leader." But with the advent of social networking, I've found my personal life and public persona beginning to

blur together, I will even be sitting for my first-ever "publicity photo" later this month. I was happily (I'll admit it) shocked to wake up in December and find that Pagan blogger Peter Dybing had named me one of "Ten Pagans who made a difference in 2011." (He liked my editorial in *W&P* about ministering to incarcerated Pagans.) Who saw *that* coming?

Fortuitously, *SageWoman* Herself is always delighted to bring me back down to earth. Each day I sit down to my desk and face a veritable torrent of email: submissions, requests, complaints, press releases and queries, often as many as a hundred in a morning. Working through this deluge isn't easily automated nor delegated since the tender seedlings of the real-life stories that make *SageWoman* what She is are braided right into this stream, waiting to be discovered. So it is, during this seemingly tiresome task, that I am reminded of a central, undeniable, and transformative fact: that the vast majority of what I know about the Goddess I've learned from *you*, the *SageWoman* community.

Our "fans" — the readers, poets, artists, writers, interviewers, reviewers and mystics who share their hearts in these pages (and let's not forget our advertising sponsors and the bookstores who carry us) — are the ones that inspire me, bless me, and make me oh-so-thankful that I am able to do this work.

You are the true "sage" women of this magazine, and it is with an overflowing and grateful heart that I salute you all.

Gaia bless, and happy Spring!



ANNE NEWKIRK NIVEN is the Editor of *SageWoman*, *Witches&Pagans*, and *Crone* magazines. She, her husband Alan, and their three sons 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.

#84 "Women & Men"

NEW Deadline May 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.

#85 "Herbal Magick"

Deadline August 1, 2012

Green witchery — the magick of the natural world, especially plants — is one of the most popular topics among *SageWoman* readers, so this is your chance to tell us about how you use plants (especially herbs) in both your magickal/spiritual practice and for healing and well-being. We are especially interested in your experience of green/wildcrafting; growing your own plants and connecting with devas/spiritual plant beings.

Coming Soon:

#86: *Renewal & Rebirth*

#87: *Serenity*