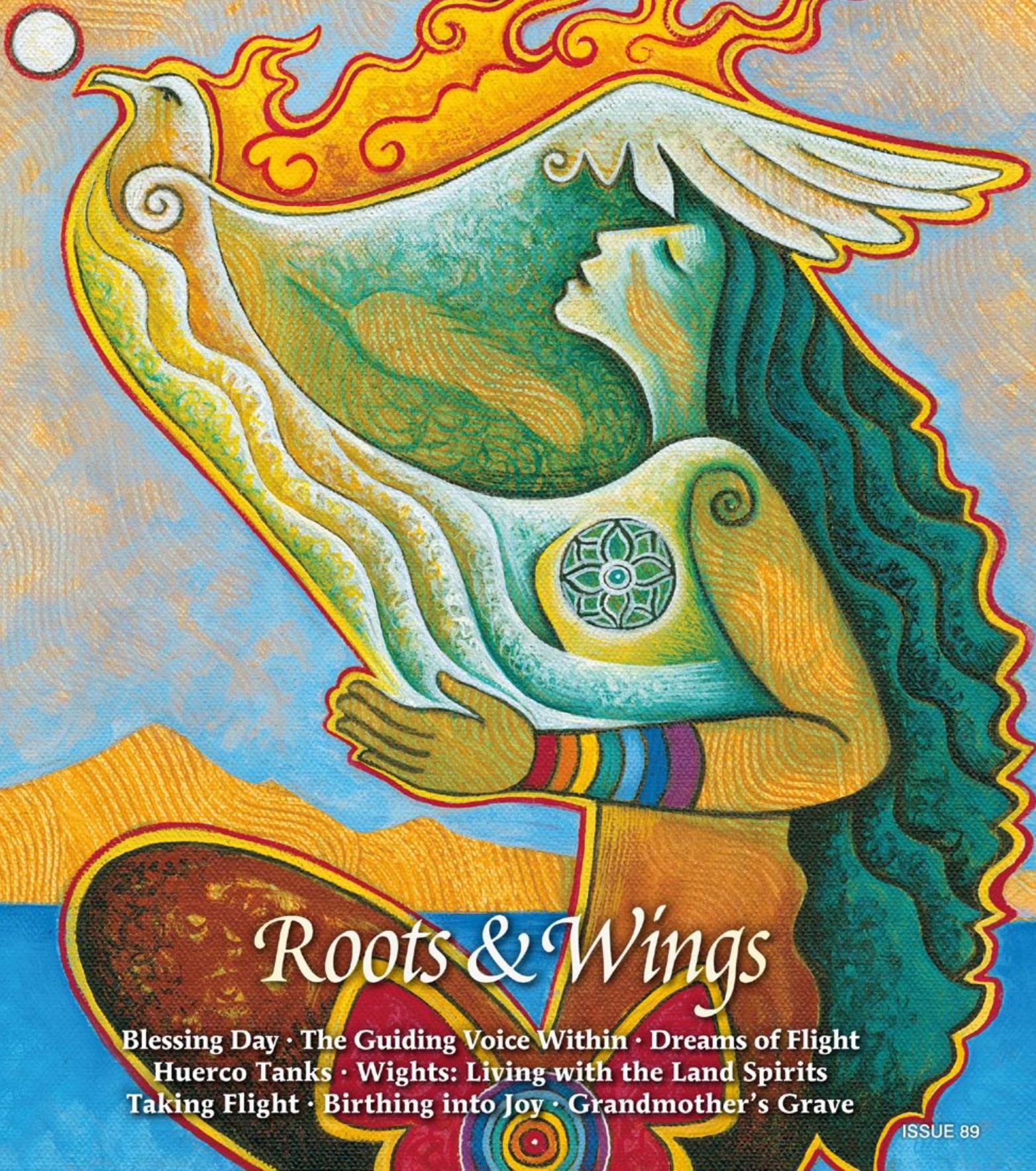


SageWoman

Celebrating the Goddess in Every Woman



Roots & Wings

Blessing Day · The Guiding Voice Within · Dreams of Flight
Huerco Tanks · Wights: Living with the Land Spirits
Taking Flight · Birthing into Joy · Grandmother's Grave

ISSUE 89

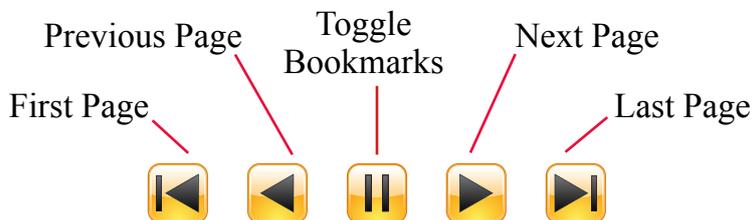
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Living the Dream: Letter from the Editor

by Anne Newkirk Niven

*There's a river of birds
in migration,
a nation of women with wings.*

Libana, "There's a River of Birds"
A Circle is Cast, 1986

It's sure looking like spring here in western Oregon, even though as I write this, February has just begun. Yesterday, my son Andrew and I took a walk around our neighborhood. We rejoiced to find a few crocuses peeping up from the dark cool soil. They seemed shy, almost tentative, and for good reason: less than six weeks ago this very ground was covered in snow. But there they were: a few tightly-coiled tendrils of green reaching for the sky, some splayed wide open as if attempting to sunbathe in the low-angle light.

There was nothing extraordinary about the crocus's appearance — I've seen this brave little flower poke its vibrant petals right up through the snow in years past. This year, there is no need for such heroics: our wet, dark season seems to pretty much have surrendered to the sun, vanquished by the bright fire of Brigid's cauldron, perhaps. Nonetheless, we were both cheered by the flower's appearance on this balmy afternoon.

We kept on walking, and now that we'd spotted them, the crocus seemed to be everywhere: more and more purple, lilac, and yellow flowers scattered in lawns and little patches of grass. A sprightly young cat — reminiscent of our Zillah during her now-distant kittenhood — bounced down the sidewalk ahead of us, nonchalantly surveying his domain.

Turning a corner, we wandered down the cul-de-sac that leads, via a secret shortcut, to an urban trail that circles our neighborhood. We were heading for home, happily content at our discoveries of spring's nascent ascent as captured in Andrew's smart phone to share with the world.

But as I looked ahead down the street I was quite surprised to find a bed of daffodils in full bloom perched just above my head. There were at least half-a-hundred brazen yellow-and-gold flowers eagerly trumpeting Spring's arrival.

We were taken aback: a few crocus blossoms peeking up here-and-there was a welcome reminder of the coming warmth, but somewhat ordinary. Dozens of daffodils erupting in early February? That was something else again.

Although daffodils in February might seem startling to anyone (even my son, born and raised on the mild California coast did a double take) the impact was especially strong on me. You see, it wasn't just any flower that was going full bore a full five weeks before the Spring Equinox: it was *daffodils*. Allow me to explain.

I grew up in Tacoma, part of the Puget Sound bioregion. Bounded on three sides by water, our city's closest neighbor was the Puyallup Valley. It was (and remains in parts) a fertile alluvial plain, built up from undulating Puyallup river bed, enriched by the prehistoric mudflows of the volcano — named Tahoma or Rainier depending on which side of colonization one hails from — that looms to the south above it.

The Puyallup valley of my childhood was thick with small dairies, truck farms, acres of berry vines and, above all, fields of daffodils stretching seemingly all the way to the Mountain itself. Every spring, the Puyallup Daffodil Festival was the premier civic event, complete with beauty pageants, parades, and a variety of small-town celebrations. Invented in the early 20th century (after the previous hops farms were decimated by a fatal fungus and the region turned to flower bulb farming) the Daffodil Festival celebrated this bounty of beauty and signaled the beginning of spring at the end of a long and often bleak winter.

So when I saw the blanket of daffodils in my neighbor's yard at the beginning of the second week of February, my first thought was, "Uh-oh! The Daffodil Festival is going to have to change its dates." With spring coming so early (even to Puyallup, two hundred miles to the north) I was worried that the flowers for the parade floats would be long gone by the time April rolled around.

When we got home, I immediately booted up the computer and searched for the current Daffodil Festival. "Hmm," was my immediate reaction upon reaching the festival's website. "It's now the *first* week in April, eh? I guess that should help a little." But then I noticed something that struck me as odd: nowhere on the festival website could I find a map outlining where one could visit the fields of daffodils for which the festival was named.

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Editorial Notes

We encourage submissions to *SageWoman* from all Goddess-loving women. We publish primarily first-person prose written to our announced themes. (Our "Body & Soul" department welcomes creative submissions of poetry and prose regardless of theme.) Send submissions to editor2@bbimedia.com.

Visit www.SageWoman.com for writing guidelines, subscriptions and blog links. You can also call 888-724-3966, or write via postal mail to: SageWoman, P. O. Box 687, Forest Grove, OR 97116.

Next issue is #90 "The Magic of Trees." Deadline for submissions has passed.

#91 "Worlds of Faerie" Deadline May 1, 2016

Have you ever encountered the fae — not only those little "Tinker Belle" sprites, but the Good Neighbors? Please share your experiences (sublime or scary — the Others inspire both fear and awe) with our readers.

Coming Soon:

#92: *Our Heart's Desire*

While I pondered this conundrum, I idly scanned the search engine results that had led me to the official festival page. Sadly, the explanation of the missing map was right there in front of me.

Dated January 30, 2015, the headline read: "Last daffodil farmer in Puyallup gets ready to sell." My heart skipped a beat: perhaps there was no map for touring the daffodil fields of the Puyallup Valley because none of the flower fields still existed? The *Tacoma News Tribune* story confirmed my sad hypothesis.

The last Puyallup Valley daffodil farmer is preparing for industrial development on his land right outside the Puyallup city limits.

Pierce County is reviewing a preliminary proposal for a warehouse distribution center on land owned by Roger Knutson, owner of Sumner-based Knutson Farms. The plans are likely to add fuel to a contentious land-use debate over swath of former daffodil farmland situated inside Puyallup.

I felt like I had been sucker-punched right in the gut. Next came righteous indignation. "No wonder," I thought angrily, "that the festival doesn't have to modify its dates to fit the new (climate-changed) seasons: the floats and decorations no longer use local flowers. What a sham!"

But when I probed my feelings more deeply, I realized that what I was experiencing was a deep sense of grief and loss. I had always assumed that the berry farms and fields of daffodils in the Puyallup Valley had been preserved, even if what I remembered as a childhood agrarian paradise was under pressure from creeping development. Alas, with just one newspaper story I realized that my mental image of the area was several decades out of date.

I'm hardly the first person to discover that my childhood memories no longer match reality; in fact, I imagine this disconcerting experience becomes rather commonplace upon reaching a certain age. (I'm now 56.) But upon deeper reflection, I have decided to seek the hidden gift in this disheartening news.

You see, I *did* get a lovely dose of spring from the sunny daffodils yesterday, right here in my neighborhood in suburban Oregon. My appreciation for those flowers may have been rooted in those long-lost Puyallup fields, but those memories are still (literally) golden, and can empower and inspire me to fight for the beauty, self-reliance, and community values of the small-farmer rich agrarian landscape where I now make my home.

Forest Grove today is poised between a small-town rural past, a suburban present, and an unknown future. It asks itself: is urbanism inevitable, or is there an alternative that can keep us rooted in the soil while still being connected to the wider world? As I have become more involved in local politics (a vocation I last engaged in decades ago) I now see how important it is to value the traditions and self-image of a place while leaning fearlessly into the future. A community, just like a person, needs to embrace both its roots *and* wings.

Where (and who) are your community? What do you (and it) need to grow and thrive? May the Goddess guide us all as we strive to open our hearts to find the answers to these questions. Spring is coming — what transformations will it bring to all our lives?



ANNE NEWKIRK NIVEN is the Editor of *SageWoman* and *Witches&Pagans* magazines. She lives and works in her home office, across a gulch from a family of noisy suburban chickens in Forest Grove, OR.