Member Contributions

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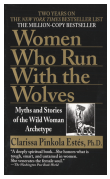

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SHE SPEAKS

Dear Sisters,

I love estate sales. Not only because I love antiques and old books, but also because I'm fascinated with the way people order their lives. What do they choose to surround themselves with? What does it say about who they were? Where are they now? Okay, that last one is always a little depressing.

Of Pies and Pentagrams

Reputable estate sale companies maintain the confidentiality of their clients, which allows me to create a positive ending to every sale inside my head. This couple is now living in a tiny house next door to their daughter surrounded constantly by adoring grandchildren. That lovely woman moved in with her best friend and they bake cookies all day while drinking tea. That guy moved to a hippie commune where his memories of the sixties are truly valued. That couple died holding hands with smiles on their faces (or maybe that was the final scene of the notebook). None of them went to assisted living homes and none of them suffered from mental decline.

One day last spring, not long before the pandemic isolated us all, I went to an estate sale in a beautiful old house downtown. It's the kind of place I would have called a mansion as a kid, but that just fits into Savannah's Victorian district. As I browsed the full library, I started to notice works on mythology, spirituality, and lesbianism. Works of feminist theory next to books by Joseph Campbell. I felt suddenly sure that I was in the home of lesbian witches. Women who, given that I was at their estate sale and most of the books were published decades before, likely began building their lives well before either of those identities were accepted in the South. From the looks of the home I was standing in, build it they did. For some reason, watching people pick apart their belongings was harder than it normally is. I quickly grabbed any book related to their spirituality.

And then I walked into the kitchen. There stood a six-foot tall, four-foot-wide, two-foot-deep pie safe decorated with pentacles. It was at least 100 years old and had been almost built into their kitchen. There was no way I could move it. It weighed hundreds of pounds. I also couldn't afford it. And yet, I had to have it. I just couldn't leave it there. It needed to be with someone who understood and appreciated it. I bought it.

I had until 4:00 to get it out of the house. I called my husband, who would arrive back in Savannah at about 3:50 in a suit fresh from a day at the Georgia legislature in Atlanta and begged him to help me pick it up. To his credit, as he nearly broke his back and definitely stained his suit helping the guys load it, he never complained. As I stood watching, a beautiful older woman walked up to me in a full-length black dress, a stunning scarf, and a silver pentacle necklace and said, "You'll never regret buying that." And then she turned, walked away, and disappeared.

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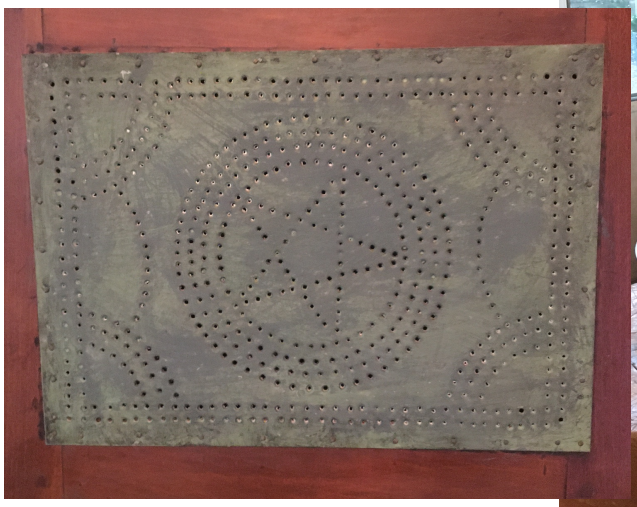
All photos that are otherwise uncredited were produced by Samarra Mullis.

She's been right. It stands proudly in my kitchen. A symbol of a past well-lived and a future constantly being built. May we all create a life that suites us completely and have someone to carry on its legacy when we're gone.

Be Well,
Shannon Browning-Mullis, editor



Here – Hear by Sarah Muller

Some things are better
Walking outside
I hear fewer urban noises
Less traffic - less car noise
The Eisenhower makes a gentler hum
like the sound of the Ohio Turnpike
from the campfire at Ledgewood
Fewer commuters means
fewer trains means
less train noise
I walk toward the overpass in the evening
I hear the chime of announcements from the El
I watch two riders depart this "rush" hour train

Many commuters walk from their desk to the kitchen when work is done
Offices in the Loop are dark
Desk lamps are on all over Oak Park
I hear the sounds of birds everywhere
The trees echo with birds from our urban forest
A murder of crows fill a tree
I hear sounds I have been missing for years
Children yelling to their friends as they
ride their bikes on the car emptied streets
The sound of laughter and shouts from backyards
the springs of the trampolines
I am hearing more
At least more
of what I want to hear

News from the CoCo

From Gail Stephenson, Marketing and Outreach Coordinator
The Coordinating Council has been meeting virtually. We have elected not to meet in person due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Coordinating Council would like to thank Stacy Leona for all of the hard work that she has put into creating and maintaining the website. Christine Grewcock is taking over as the web goddess. Christine has been the web goddess in the past and we are looking forward to working with her again. Thank you Stacy for the amazing job you have done and thank you Christine for the amazing job you are about to do.

Save these dates for our next in-person events!

October 6 - 10, 2021
April 27 - May 1, 2022
October 5 - 9, 2022
May 17 - 21, 2023

We have our next virtual worship and membership meeting set for Friday, June 18th at 6:30pm EST. The membership meeting is only for a few minutes as we affirm new CoCo members, Searchettes, and the Emerald position. Maggie Lovins is coordinating the worship and could use some help. If you are interested in helping her out, please contact her at mlovins@hotmail.com.

As my term of office expires this summer, this will be the last newsletter article that I pen. I have been blessed to work with an amazing group of women on the Coordinating Council. They work hard with little thanks for all that they do. Even with the pandemic keeping them from helping with face to face events, they helped get a virtual event off the ground, sponsored virtual social hours, worship services and a membership meeting. That is in addition to the daily work that it takes to keep UUWomenspirit up and going. Thank you so very much for allowing me to be a part of this experience.

News from the Volunteer Coordinator by Alice Carnes

True fulfillment in life doesn't come from what we get, it comes from what we give. –Marie Forleo

The Searchettes, Tammy Sadler, Shannon Browning-Mullis, and Nancy Hagman have successfully identified four volunteers filling all of the open positions in UUWomenspirit. Please welcome our new leaders to UUWomenspirit. On the Coordinating Council we welcome:

Nina Brewer-Davis who assumes Gail Stephenson's position as Marketing & Outreach Coordinator.
Tammy Sadler who assumes Alice Carnes' position as Volunteer Coordinator. As Tammy makes the change to Volunteer Coordinator, her Searchette position is filled by Linda Sanders.
The Emerald position that was held by Valerie Stephenson is filled by Adrianna Lee.

The CoCo extends a huge thank you to Nina, Tammy, Linda, and Adrianna for their willingness to volunteer and to make a commitment to UUWomenspirit.

More great news. Linda Sterner has agreed to fill the position of Registrar for an additional 3 year term. Please join with me in thanking Linda for her "above and beyond" contribution to UUWomenspirit. Linda shares with me, "I started attending UUWomenspirit in fall 2012. As the Mountain's www.themountainrlc.org Campwise Administrator, I worked closely with the UUWomenspirit Registrar, Margaret Schmidt. While helping sisters with their enrollments during the spring and fall events that year, I decided UUWomenspirit would be a fun group to join. I have attended every event since then, except for missing two events when I was traveling. I was invited to serve on a Planning Committee in 2017 and I loved it. When Christine Grewcock rolled off the CoCo in 2018, I was invited to become the Registrar and have enjoyed my role." Linda has a lifelong commitment to the Mountain serving in various capacities including Chair of the Board of Trustees. Linda says, "I encourage sisters to join both UUWomenspirit www.uuwomenspirit.org ($45 annually) and the Mountain www.themountainrlc.org ($50 individual, $85 household/family). Many UUWomenspirit members support both organizations." The Mountain eagerly awaits UUWomenspirit's return this fall.

Please plan to attend the membership meeting on June 18. As a member of UUWomenspirit, we will vote to affirm the women who have agreed to take on these new roles. All of the new volunteers begin their three year terms on August 1st. After the Membership meeting, we will have a lovely virtual worship service. Look for more details on Facebook and on the Zoom link in your email MailChimp from UUWomenspirit.

As I roll off the CoCo as Volunteer Coordinator, I want to thank all of you for your support and friendship. Many of you may remember that several years ago, I moved from Charlotte, NC to Pittsburgh, PA. When Susie Sherman-Hall (Searchette) approached me about becoming the Volunteer Coordinator in Spring 2018, she didn't realize that she was throwing me a lifeline.

While moving to a new city is exciting it is also incredibly unsettling. Being a CoCo member gave me an exciting focus – finding volunteers with the Searchettes for my beloved UUWomenspirit. Additionally, I enjoyed the support of working with committed sisters on the CoCo. On July 31st, I officially take off my Volunteer Coordinator hat, but I'll take this opportunity to encourage you to consider serving/volunteering for UUWomenspirit. My wish is that your UUWomenspirit volunteer experience is as rich and fulfilling as mine.

Fantasy
Words by Sarah Muller

The sea laps gently at my feet as I
turn to walk up the mountainous dunes
soft dune grass tickles my calves

I walk to my cottage
remembering another life
The life I left for solitude

Beltane

Has there ever been a better year to celebrate Beltane? It is the celebration of life, birth, and renewal. What could we need more this year? As the sun warms and the earth thaws, our limbs loosen and stretch, and we begin to come back to life. After winter, after isolation, after quarantine. As the earth sucks in a deep breath of fresh cool air, so do we. And we emerge. Ready to breathe, and dance, and run, and love. Ready to live.

Beltane Ritual

Take a walk in nature, a forest, a mountain, a stream, a river, even a park. Choose a quiet spot away from others. Open a circle in the way that is customary for you. Sit quietly. Observe the plants, animals, and insects around you. Slow your breathing to the pace of the place. Close your eyes. Listen to the sounds. Feel the air on your skin. Begin to send your awareness down into the earth. Down, down, down. Sinking into the cool soil. Feeling embraced by the earth. Hunker down. Rest. Feel safe and secure. Stay here as long as you like. Now, feel your feet turning to roots and sinking further into the earth, growing. Feel your arms begin to reach toward the surface. Growing up, up, up like a sprouting plant after a long winter. Finally, feel your face emerge from the earth and be hit with the wind in the air and the light of the sun. Stretch up and feel life coursing through you in all its possibilities. Stay as long as you like. Thank the earth for allowing you this space. Open the circle as is customary for you.

Urges, Longings, and Sighs
Image and Poem by Betty Lou Chaika

In Jungian therapy there is an important practice called "holding the tension of the opposites."

When I dream of a house
built around a giant magnolia
tree, but can't find the
trunk inside or the roots outside,
then I must hold the tension
between my heart's desire
to savor this mystery
and my mind's itchy
urge to understand it.
When I long to honor
the sacred ground
of some beautiful place,
but don't know how,
then I must tolerate the discomfort
of not-knowing until I hear:
make an offering filled with
birdseed and words of praise
to hang on a nearby tree.
When I am in fear, as
perhaps we all are these days,
and hold my breath,
to keep myself safe,
then I must endure the conflict
between not-breathing and
trying to breathe with Spirit,
where real shelter lies, until
Compassion makes me sigh.

Plant Profile

Sandalwood

The sensual, earthy smell of sandalwood is the perfect complement to Beltane. Long popular in perfumes and aromatherapy, it was traditionally sourced from East India. This Indian species of Sandalwood has been put at risk by over harvesting. Responsible users now source from other species including Western Australian. Sandalwood is calming and relaxing and researched suggests it has antimicrobial, antioxidant, analgesic, and anti-inflammatory properties. What better way to explore sandalwood at Beltane than in your favorite massage oil?

The Perfect Beltane by Molly Remer

The cool touch of dew
across cheeks and brow,
a single pink dianthus emerging
between stones,
sunlight kisses through leafy canopies,
a circle of flower petals,
a gentle hoop of wild raspberry cane
making a celebration arch
under which to sit
on a broad flat stone,
gooseberry bushes by my knees
and the sound of wild turkeys
rising from the valley,
as the sun lifts steadily
into the sky.
It is this small magic
of living I crave
and delight in,
the silent ceremonies
of surprise and skin
that arise before my eyes
and sink into my bones,
the very day itself
the ritual handbook
of a wild witch alone

Rings
Words by Sarah Muller

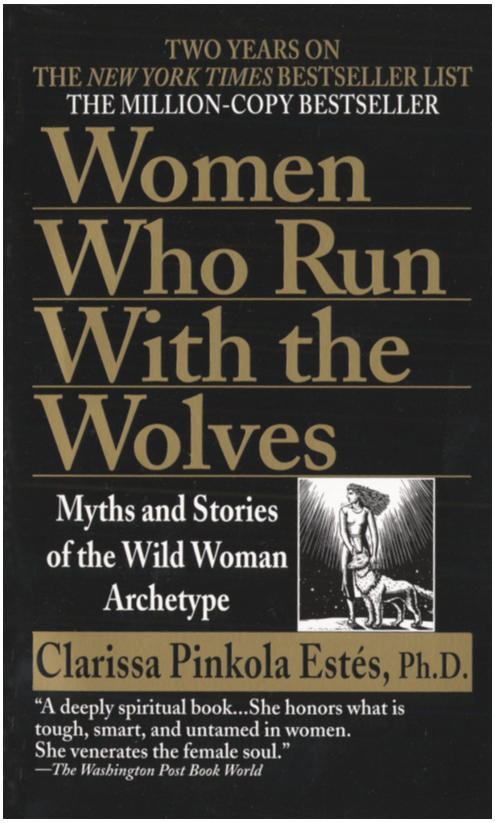
She handed me a moonstone ring
in an art deco setting
It was Mom's - she said
No history lesson was forthcoming
I had never seen it before
Where did it come from?
Was this from the lover before Dad?
The mysterious student studying to be a minister
Seen in an old picture holding her tight
Before she died -
they cut her rings off
Her fingers swollen with arthritis she didn't feel
Looking at her naked hand -
she told me her marriage was over
Finally, divorced from a man dead for a decade
I remember when she got her ring
After her own mother died
The year they took her away from me
He took a tiny chip from her mother's ring
Mounted in a platinum setting
the chip looked larger
To make her see -
he still loved her
twenty-five years later
I wear these rings
One on each hand
With my own wedding bands
One given to plight his troth
One given when my hands were -
swollen with disease and medication
To make me see -
he still loved me -
all these years later
They remind me of her love
They remind me how she loved and was loved

Mother's Day
Words by Sarah Muller

It rained in the morning
Mother's Day over lox and bagels
was on my daughter's front porch
They had walked to get fresh bagels
The new bagel store had opened
Just before the shutdown
We walked over through a light drizzle
My husband took his bagel home
Afraid to take off his mask to eat
She was still within the two-week
post-covid-ward exposure
Afraid to have us come near
I asked for another chair from the house
They spent fifteen minutes cleaning -
Afraid that we would catch it from a chair
That was Mother's Day
No brunch at a hotel
No son and granddaughters
Not much of Mother's Day

Womenspirit Book Club Review

Thanks to everyone so far who has participated in the Women Who Run with the Wolves Book Club. Special thanks to Nancy Hagman, Alice Carnes, and Katie Bloedau for leading discussions! The first three sessions have been quite popular, and the group has chosen to transition to monthly meetings. Come be part of the fun!



Chapter 4 led by Lisa Sherman May 4, 2021 7:00 Eastern

Chapter 5 led by Susie Sherman-Hall June 8, 2021 7:00 Eastern

Chapter 6 led by Susie Sherman-Hall July 13, 2021 7:00 Eastern

Dear WS CoCo,

I would like to express my appreciation for your willingness to offer the once a month social time for us! I miss everyone so much and it seems like forever since we have been able to meet in person. Being able to connect with WS sisters on Zoom has been delightful.

Blessed be, Toni Stephenson

Nebulizer
Words by Sarah Muller

When they were babies
my machine lived at their house
I would sit with them on my lap
singing and rocking
rocking and singing
rocking and singing until they slept
Their parents hated
the treatments
Is it like hearing your baby cry -
Hurting deep inside
When the boys cried
it was a loud noise
Unpleasant to be sure
it didn't hurt my soul
The machine was on a schedule
so the horrible hacking cough wouldn't
start

Later tied to relief
Ian coughing so hard he vomited
His tiny little voice saying
the inhaler isn't enough

I carried my son into the emergency room
as nurses rushed ahead of me making way
His tiny body
retracting with each breath
The vomiting his medicine would induce
The shaking and trembling it caused when
it didn't
The nebulizer is a relief

Jamie
Words by Sarah Muller

Driving west on the way home
from Indiana in the spring
Just close enough to Chicago
to pick up Chicago radio
There had been a terrible accident
A daycare van had crossed the median
They say the child's name
I must have heard wrong
That couldn't be Terri's Jamie
I must have heard wrong
I hadn't seen her for years
They had moved
We no longer met in morning and
afternoons
Dropping off and picking up
How can this be
My mind revolts
Jamie lying in a casket
Holding her Care Bear
Tears stream down my cheeks as
Terri talks about the other child
The child lingering between life and
death
His parents still in limbo
How can she still be standing?

Alone
Words by Sarah Muller

When I was a child
I was often frightened when I was alone
I'd hear the house creak
Instead of the wind
I heard a ghost
When I was an teen
I'd hear the sounds in my head of others
Others who didn't want me at their parties
Others who didn't want a date with me
Being alone felt like a judgement of me
that made me unlovely, unloveable
Later when my kids were away
lonely felt like the ache of empty arms
Finally, I discovered the joy of being alone
Lonely was being alone when you were with someone
Alone was the pleasure of long hours with myself
Alone was the pleasure of a long hot bath
Alone was a new book
Alone was an empty notebook with time to fill it
Alone was the sound in my head of me

Fall 2021 - We Were Made for these Times

Rain Pope - Event Coordinator
Helen Rogers - Worship
Cheryl Dent - Worship
Amber Grey - Tracks & Workshops
Beth Flanagan - Sales & Activities
Iris Padgett - Scribe
Amanda Morris - Chaplain

We Were Made For These Times

Of all the times and places we could possibly have lived, we live here, now. As confusing and frightening as this world may be, we were MADE for these times.
We have the strength and courage we need to get through these challenges, and in the process build a strong foundation for the world we're creating for ourselves and future generations.

We'll build these strong foundations through strong connections. When we gather together this Fall, we'll reach out to connect to each other, our sisters.

We'll reach down to connect to the deep, rich magic of the earth beneath our feet. We'll reach back to connect with The Ancestors.
We'll reach up to the stars to connect with our dreams of the world we'll create.

We are so very excited to reconnect with everyone back at The Mountain! The past year has been hard on all of us, and gathering together with our sisters is one of the threads The Goddess will use to stitch our broken hearts back together.

We'll arrive at The Mountain with the New Moon. With candlelight and crystal focus, we'll worship together. We'll remember who we are and those who've come before. We'll refresh ourselves, and re-imagine the possibilities for the new world we're living in.

We have some exciting plans for Tracks and Workshops, with room for more! If you have something you'd like to present, please send in your proposals as soon as possible. If you have an idea, but aren't quite sure how to turn that idea into a workshop, get in touch with Amber. Womenspirit has always been a safe place to try new things, and we would love to help you develop your ideas.

We love you, we miss you, and we eagerly await the moment when we Merry Meet again!

Snake and Snake Productions

http://snakeandsnake.com

919-627-3138

Susan Baylies makes her lunar phase card and related products, t-shirts, goddess jewelry, and astrology charts.

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Maggie Lovins

https://www.etsy.com/shop/TwoWitchesinaKitchen?ref=search_shop_redirect

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Wingshuck Corn Shuck Dolls

Anne Freels
Anneofriel@gmail.com
865-705-9755
Www.wingshuck.etsy.com
Facebook: Anne Freels and Wingshuck

I make colorful corn shuck dolls representing the seasons, the holidays on the Wheel of the Year, traditional Appalachian, altar dolls, kitchen witches and Halloween and Samhain witches.

Annie Egypt Herbals

Anne Freels
Anneofriel@gmail.com
865-705-9755
Facebook: Annie Egypt Herbals

All natural herbal soaps and skin care made in small batches without synthetics or preservatives.

Rain's Obsessive Stitchery

Rain Pope
http://rainsews.com
rain@rainsews.com
615-238-7760

Hand-dyed yarn and clothing, embroidered items including towels, tarot bags, and UUWomenspirit logo items, chainmaille jewelry, and various other shiny things.