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by Larisa Hunter**

ISBN 978-1-905713-81-3

Here is the book for giving your a window into living Heathenism and daily life

Hexenmeister & Graphic Artist Interview with Jj Starwalker

By Christopher Blackwell

Jj is known in two things, one as a Hexenmeister whom paints what we know as Hex signs, that most of us might associate with the Pennsylvania “Dutch” or German and she also designs and heads a company that does graphic design for businesses to help businesses get noticed by potential customers.

She was once contacted by the state of Pennsylvania to design and Hex sign for the Christmas decoration from the state to be put on the White House Christmas tree. She lives in the state of Maine. She was kind enough to give me time for this interview.

Christopher: Could you give us a bit of back ground about yourself?

Jj: That is probably the hardest question in this entire interview! In no particular order, I am a mother of 5 daughters, grandmother of 12 (which will become 15 this year), farmer, artist, business owner. I am in a domestic relationship with a wonderful fellow and also live with 2 large dogs, 6 house and one barn cat, and a current flock of 4 hens and 7 ducks.

My first round of college found me double-majoring in astronomy and mathematics with minors in physics and engineering. I did not complete the degree, leaving college just a few credits short for personal

reasons. When I finally decided to go back to school, my aging credits were far too old and moldy for me to efficiently complete the degree, so I opted to head in a different direction entirely, taking an AAS in Graphic Design.

I was born in Michigan and over the years (following my dad’s career changes and later those first of my husband and then my own careers, I have lived in CA, MD, CO, WI, WA (both sides of the state), OR, TX, NC (again, both sides of the state) and finally settled in Maine, for the climate and affordable land.

Christopher: What is a Hex sign, what have you learned about its history?

Jj: The people who are called the Pennsylvania Dutch are actually of German descent; immigrants who arrived during the 17th and 18 centuries and settled in the area that became the state of Pennsylvania.

The cost of paint kept their barns unpainted until the early 19th century, when barns began to not only be painted, but also to be decorated with designs, often 6 pointed star or flower forms. These designs, especially in some of their more complex forms, not only resemble patterns found in their quilts, but also echo designs found carved on buildings in Europe and in folk art traditions around the globe.

In Pennsylvania Dutch country, painting of these designs, which were most common-

ly called “blumme” or “schtanne” (meaning flowers or stars) by the painters, directly on barns was at its peak in the early 20th century. The origin of the term “hex sign” is unknown; some attribute it to the German word “Hexe” meaning witch; others reference the common use of six points to the designs. One book on the subject, Bilardi’s *The Red Church Or the Art of Pennsylvania German Braucherei*, noted that one farmer used the term “Hexefoos” to describe the signs.

In the mid-20th century, Jacob Zook of Paradise, PA, began to use the silk screen technique to replicate the designs on Masonite, as souvenirs for tourists. Painters of the signs are of two minds on the designs; some insist they are “just for pretty” but others maintain they have talismanic properties. I was taught that these designs were invocation, prayers and blessings.

Christopher: How did it come to be that your grandmother taught you? Isn’t it a bit against the usual tradition?

Jj: Yes, from what I have been told, it is very unusual for her to have been a painter, to start with, and for her to have taught me as well. She told me it was a family tradition, and in our family it was to be handed from male to female and back to male, alternating through the generations. I had only one uncle on that side of the family, a Marine until he retired from the service, who had no interest in the calling. His son (who technically was not “blood”

as this was his step son) who was my age had no interest either.

I’m not sure why grandmother Katie (Katharina) decided to teach me, other than that I did enjoy drawing and doodling with the drafting tools that we had around (my dad taught mechanical drawing and wood shop at the high school level, and always allowed me to use his tools.) In fact, I learned my letters with his drafting pens dipped in India ink, copying from a old type book! The “basic hex rosette” is what you get, most likely, if you doodle with a drawing compass without resetting the tool.

Christopher: When you were learning, did it occur to you that you might make this a calling of your own?

Jj: No, not really. They were pretty designs and I did understand that they had meaning and power, but as a girl (grandmother died when I was a sophomore in high school) and then as a young woman, I did not give it much thought. When I drew one, I DID do it “properly” as I had been taught, and I did occasionally draw one when I needed the specific blessing, but they were only a small part of many spiritual and creative outlets early on.

In the early 70s, I had some small success as an artist using the batik technique (wax resist and dye) and some of the forms I used in my work then, were traditional hex signs. They were included in an exhibit of my work at what was then the Egg and

the Eye gallery/restaurant in Los Angeles, which eventually became the Craft and Folk Art Museums.

Christopher: That gave just the basics. Did you have a particular Hexenmeister whose work would influence you? Why?

Jj: I never had the opportunity to meet any others familiar with this art form. At some point along the way, as a young adult, I came across a book entitled *Diary of a Hexenmeister* by Lee Gandee. In it, the author tells of his training and practice, including sharing line drawing of some very familiar – and some totally new – designs. Other than my own explorations, based on introspection, my study of symbolism and practice, Gandee, through his book, is my only influence.

Christopher: How long have you been creating these hex signs?

Jj: I started working with them seriously in the 70s, in the wax resist and dye art of batik. There was a long period when my art lay dormant, however, as my focus was on raising my family.

Christopher: How is the masculine and the feminism expressed in design. What are meanings and purpose that certain designs bring the sign as you add them?

Jj: I don't see a deliberate focus on masculine and feminine in most of my work, though there are traditional symbols that can be used to focus the energies on one

side or the other. Oak is usually considered masculine, and ivy and grape, feminine. One might say that the "star" forms feel more masculine and the "flower" ones more feminine, or that the protection signs are more masculine, but I don't necessarily think that way.

The repetition of symbols or points on stars and flowers is symbolic. Threes are of spirit; 4 of the material world and the 12 point designs bridge the realms. There are many drawn symbols that can be included in the signs and folks often request specific images that have meaning specifically to them or their tradition.

Christopher: Have you developed your own designs, evolving as you have practiced? What is the craft of Rosemaling and how does it affect your designs?

Jj: Oh, yes! I have been creating signs for years, at first by adding motifs to familiar designs. Now, I am quite comfortable designing custom signs for folks, starting from a discussion of their needs and images that convey that meaning to them.

Rosemaling, as I understand it (it is not an art form I practice) is a Norwegian style of decorative painting that uses stylized flower ornamentation, scrollwork, lining and geometric elements, often in flowing patterns. Some of the motifs bear a resemblance to forms in hexeri, but the Norwegian work uses shading in a very different way, is not constrained to lie within a circle and, to me at least, seems "busier"

than most of the hex forms. They are both have roots in northern Europe, though, so some similarity is not unexpected.

Christopher: Isn't this a very spiritual work craft? How does this affect how you go about it? What do you have to consider about your customers needs and beliefs to make this work?

Jj: Yes, indeed it is. Of course I CAN paint them "just for pretty" as they say, like the mass produced commercial signs but why bother? If that's all someone wants, they can find them easily and much more affordably. All of my signs are worked with intent, from the very beginning of cutting the plywood circles.

Even the standard repertoire than folks can order from the web site by size, with a single click, are all painted upon order, with the future owner of the blessing in mind. I send a certificate of authenticity with each sign, which includes instructions on how the owner can further empower the sign in whatever faith tradition they follow, and infuse it with their energy.

Christopher: You have referred to this as a painted prayer. Does that mean energy that must be infused as you create it?

Jj: Yes. They must be cut, drawn, and painted "with intent." I was taught that you put God at the center when you place your compass to draw the circle and that the radius represents the reach of God's will. Of course, THAT is infinite, but in a sense

the hex encompasses infinity, as you draw the bounding circle. I keep that thought as I cut each circle and repeat the process when drawing the design on the sanded and primed disk, and again when painting the colors. At each stage of the process I am drawing (pun intended) and moving energy.

Christopher: Most of the ones we see today seem to have a Christian aspect to them. But can it work with other spiritual traditions? Have you made them to fit other traditions?

Jj: Yes, I have. One of the first large wooden ones I painted was in collaboration with a Strega witch, for protection of her outdoor coven space. If I know the spiritual tradition of the person for whom I am working, I will specifically ask their Gods and/ or Goddesses into my work space. If I do not know, I speak generally to "The Powers That Be." They do not seem to be offended by that designation, which I have used for years.

One of the signs that I am currently painting include the chant "Fé, Vit, Friðr, Grið, Heill" (Wealth, Wisdom, Harmony, Security and Health) inscribed around the Blessed Year sign.

Christopher: Have you ever created special design for a special need?

Jj: Yes, Just as my grandmother did, folks come to me for help with specific issues and just as she responded, so do I. "I will

try for you.” One very custom sign I created was to help a woman protect her finances from a vengeful ex-spouse and the IRS.

Another was commissioned as a gift from one woman for her friend, a equestrian who loved jumping her horse – for protection of both horse and rider – and incorporated a silhouette taken from a photo of the actual recipient and her animal clearing an obstacle, for just a couple of examples.

Christopher: I recall reading that you have said that when a Hexenmeister creates a hex sign for a person that it changes the Hexenmeister as well. How have you found that it has changed you over the years? Does this change include a spiritual change as well?

Jj: I think any discipline that one follows for a long period changes you, if for no other reason than the discipline of it! I find the creation of the signs, from the selection of the plywood at the lumber yard (which is getting more difficult by the year, the quality of the product offered is not what it used to be), through the cutting, standing, priming, drawing, painting and finishing very calming and grounding. I feel connected to my heritage and my tradition and yes, when I sit to paint, also very connected to the Sacred.

Christopher: Where can people learn more about you and this craft that you do?

Jj: My work is shown and distributed primarily through my web site, www.DutchHexSign.com. I can also be found on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/DutchHexSign>) and occasionally on Twitter and Google+. I also have a blog on Blogger, which can be found at <http://dutchhexsign.blogspot.com/>, though it is also embedded in my web site.

Christopher: How did you decide to train in the graphic Arts. Was that related in any way to learning from your Grandmother.

Jj: Actually, no. I followed in the footsteps of my oldest daughter, who chose that major at the community college because it required no math! My best friend from high school, a wonderful artist who took a degree in Byzantine and Roman art history ended up as an art director, had made comments when we were in school about the wonderful layout and design of the displays I made for my science fair projects. I was a science geek, back in the day. And I always loved calligraphy (“lettering” in our family, a heritage from my dad). When I discovered, from my daughter’s school work, that design was not like the old “commercial art” field and did not necessarily require one to be a whiz with “traditional media” I decided to give it a go.

Christopher: When did you start your company?

Jj: Vision IPD was born in September of 2001 and incorporated two years later.

Christopher: You create custom designs for your customers?

Jj: I offer small businesses and non-profit organizations a complete line of design services, from the concept and execution of their logo, through the visual identity of the organization, to any and all publications or promotional materials they may need.

Christopher: How does graphic design affect a business?

Jj: It is the mission of a designer to give the business a visual identity... a face, if you will... that shows to their potential customers, in complex and subtle ways, what the business can do for them. Visual communication is about much more than just plunking words and pictures on a paper or a screen. And especially if the business caters to customers who are NOT just like the owner – who may be older or younger, from a different culture or socio-economic group, or even gender – it can be hard for the business owner to accurately see his communications from their point of view. At the best, it's easy to miss the mark and at the worst, the image put together by an amateur untrained professional can alienate the very folks the business needs to succeed.

Christopher: What must you consider when creating a design for a business?

Jj: The most important thing is “WHO are you talking to?” One of my first clients was

a startup niche software company, that designed a windows-based inventory control software for used car distributorships. At that time, that industry was still in the DOS era at work but if they had a home computer, it had been running Windows for several generations.

They had this great idea for their initial ad in the trade magazine, but needed someone to build it for them, they thought. Their idea was to depict the current software as a balding, pudgy old guy and their new offering as a hip young dude. Well, that tack may have worked in more recent years for Apple, the decision makers for the used car industry are much more likely to be older men... and would not have responded well to the proposed ad, in my opinion. The software guys immediately saw the problem, when I was able to get them to look from the customer's view, which they had not previously considered.

We opted for an ad that addressed what these buyers likely wanted out of life... MORE LIFE and less work... with a drawing of a nondescript fellow relaxing against a tree, fishing pole in hand, and text touting the ease of use of the new product. It was the ONLY ad in the magazine that included a graphic other than a car, which made it immediately eye-catching, and they had a great response.

Christopher: What are some of the companies and groups that you have done work for?

Jj: I worked with IBM briefly, as an illustrator of technical concepts; also MediSpecialty.com. in the heyday of the dot-com boom. They developed and managed a woman's health web site for laypeople and medical professionals and developed materials for a variety of medical specialties, such as the Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery community.

Most recently I have been designing the yearly tabloid publication for the Cape Lookout National Seashore and the year-book for the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center, a community supported facility, both in North Carolina. I work with smaller clients as well, such as the River City Therapy and Wellness Center in Bangor, ME.

Christopher: What kinds of items do you create designs for helping business promotion?

Jj: I prefer working in print for business clients, though I also design, maintain and even host web sites. Depending on the needs of the customers, I can provide eye-catching black and white ads for the local paper, up to full color ads for national magazines, as well as catalogues, brochures, rack cards and brochures... "If it's words and images, we do it!"

Christopher: This may be a silly question, but I have to ask. As your goal is to help your customer's business, is there any similarity between what you do as a Hexenmeister and what you do as a graphic

designer?

Jj: Well, maybe, but minus the specific help of the Gods! One similarity in both endeavors, though, is that, as an artist/designer/painter/creator my work is conduit through which the energy flows. It is not the focus, not the end but the vehicle.

Christopher: What else do you do for your clients?

Jj: I am always teaching... the more a client knows about what I do and how it works (to a limit... I don't expect them to become "geeks" and I make sure to keep my technical conversations in English, and reserve the "geek speak" for the tech folks) the more effectively we can work together.

There are a lot of misconceptions floating around about advertising, web sites, social media, AND it's a constantly changing landscape. I try to keep my clients current, and help them to understand that we are moving to an ever-increasing level of interaction between businesses and customers. A small business can't really delegate their social media presence. Someone at the business, someone trustworthy and responsible, increasingly has to be their voice on Facebook and to a lesser degree, Twitter. That's today.

Tomorrow there will likely be a new interactive forum and that's where we will have to go "play" to interact with our customers and potential clients. I try to make sure

everyone understands.

Christopher: Where can people learn more about Vision IPD?

Jj: Visit us on the web at <http://www.visionipd.com>

Christopher: Is there anything else that you would like our readers to know?

Jj: Nope, right now I'm totally "written out."

Heathen Path of Urglaawe **Interview with Robert L. Schreiwer** By Christopher Blackwell

In all the reconstructed religions, modern day people try to recreate as much of the old religion as is possible based on what scholarship has preserved. Yet this is based on the religion as it was practiced in Europe. But had Heathens settled in the Americas how would the local needs have caused them to adapt their beliefs?

We Americans are often considered to be a rather rootless people, in that in the rush to be come Americans our ancestors often quickly ditched the old customs, so that we today grow up with no ties at all to our own ancestry. But what if your ancestors did not drop their ties to the old customs, what if each of us had a very definite cultural identity? Then how would affect our approach in going back to the old gods?

Rob Schreiwer had just that experience in

a culture that has been here for centuries, so I thought I would let him explain this different experience to us and what it led to.

Christopher: Could you give us a bit of back ground about the unique society that you grew up with. Who were they and what was it like to grow up with a very definite idea of who you were and with traditions going back centuries.

Rob: The Deitsch (Pennsylvania Dutch or Pennsylvania German) culture is often considered to be divided into two categories: Plain and Fancy. The Plain Deitsch are the ones who stand out because of the religious mandates in regard to their dress. This would, of course, include the Amish and the Mennonites. It also includes a whole bunch of other religious sects.

The Fancy Deitsch probably make up about 85-90% of the Deitsch population. This group includes people of a variety of Protestant and Catholic backgrounds, non-sectarian, non-religious, and, of course, those who engage in Heathen practices, whether overtly or covertly.

There is ample documentation that Heathen practices went underground and continued in the folk religion. The religious liberties of Colonial Pennsylvania afforded the opportunity for some of those Heathen practices to become part of the Deitsch identity. **Urglaawe** is the organization and expansion of Heathen elements in the Deitsch culture. Thus, while the term

“Urglaawe” is new, it is based on very old, living traditions. Therefore, we consider ourselves to be only partially re-constructivist.

Many of these old traditions survived as folk beliefs, superstitions, folk tales, and fairy tales. However, as we’ll discuss later, the healing practice of and its various lineages (guilds) have carried a tremendous amount of lore that is passed among guild members. This lore includes charms, incantations, magical practice, some runic knowledge, the awareness of Teutonic deities, and other elements.

I grew up with one foot planted in each aspect of Deitsch culture. Although both of my parents are in the medical profession, I still was also taken to see Brauchers or Braucherins as a boy. My great-grandmother was a Braucherin, and she passed many parts of the practice on to my grandfather. My grandfather passed some of that knowledge to my mother, and my mother, in turn, brought the awareness to me. I should say, though, that many elements of Braucherei were widespread throughout the Deitscherei (Pennsylvania Dutch Country) until modern medical institutions undertook efforts to suppress Braucherei and the government of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania undermined the Deitsch culture and language.

Christopher: How did you end up becoming Heathen?

Rob: If I had to pick an official date, it

would be September 23, 2007, which is when I formally stated that I was not a Christian. Prior to that, I identified as Christian, but I was engaging in many Heathen practices simply because they are a way of life in my culture. It may be difficult to comprehend the relationship of the folk religion to the church dogma, particularly among the Fancy Deitsch but even among the Plain sects, too. The two big churches associated with the Fancy Deitsch are the Lutheran and the Reformed (now UCC). These two denominations generally (though certainly not always) had no issue with much of the expression of the folk religion and the folk culture.

Thus, Braucherei was not a threat. It was simply a part of the folk identity. Thus, many of the Heathen aspects of the culture embedded in the daily life of a great many Deitsch folks, though they may not be aware of the roots of what they do in their daily lives. To me, then the recognition that those older, Heathen aspects were closer to the true soul of the folk than were the dogmas of the churches. To me, the conversion to Heathenry and the establishment of Urglaawe as an identity came naturally. I just wish that I were twenty years younger so I had more time to accomplish more of the work that is before us as a community.

Christopher: So how did the **Heathen Path of Urglaawe** come to be? How much did your growing up with so many old traditions help?

Rob: On that same date, September 23, 2007, I was reading a book on Hinduism. The book was written by an author who was of Norwegian descent, and she mentioned Asatru in passing. I dropped the book and started researching Asatru online. Within a matter of an hour, I was realizing that the Deitsch culture had many of the same elements in it that were described in Asatru. For a short while after I broke with Christianity, I would have identified my religion as “Braucherei” because the healing practice was whence I was deriving my sensibilities at first. Braucherei, despite the fact that it kept so many pre-Christian traditions alive through its oral lore, is not a religion. Thus, I kept researching and networking with other people.

None of the other Heathen paths had a feel to them that matched the Deitsch experience. Then one day, I was contacted by Patricia Niedrich, who is the owner of the Hexenkunst Yahoo Group. She was striving to connect more with her Deitsch heritage, and she saw me discussing the Deitsch experience on an Irminenschaft list. She suggested that I join Hexenkunst. It was through discussions on that Yahoo Group that the term “Urglaawe” was coined. Although the term is new, the roots of Urglaawe run deep into the pre-Christian era. Urglaawe is essentially the organization and development of the surviving pre-Christian aspects found in Deitsch culture. Many were things I was aware of from my own upbringing, but, as more contacts arose through my acceptance

and training in a Braucherei guild, the amount of oral lore available to me grew geometrically.

Christopher: Now the traditions had made some adoptions to their American experience. Isn't this evolving something you want to see in Urglaawe? Can this be said to be a very American form of Heathenry?

Rob: As I had alluded to above, the Deitsch culture experienced a slow, subtle, and insidious undermining by various influences beginning around 1911, which is when Deitsch (and German) was forbidden from being taught or spoken in schools. Somehow, though, the culture managed to hold on despite all odds. Outside of the Amerindian settlement of North America, the Deitsch were the first settlers not coming from the homeland of a colonial power or nation-state. This fact compelled our ancestors, in many cases, to take an oath to the English Crown, which later became a burden for many who had to choose between the oath and the Revolution. Starting in Germantown, which is now part of Philadelphia, the early Deitsch settlers fanned out into the interior of Pennsylvania and down the Appalachians. Our ancestors settled in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and into the interior parts of North Carolina. While I am not personally skilled in magical practices other than Braucherei, I am told that elements of Braucherei appear in other American magical practices, particularly in the South.

Outside of magic, the Deitsch culture has certainly influenced everything from agricultural contributions to the bulk of modern secular Christmas and Easter traditions. The Deitsch identity, particularly in the current generations, is American, yet still distinct. Our ancestors fought for the establishment of the Republic. In 1688, took part in the first anti-Slavery protest in the English realm: the Germantown Quaker Petition Against Slavery. They fought primarily for the Union in the Civil War only to end up being viewed with suspicion in the two World Wars.

In short, while the traditions had made some adaptations to the American experience, they also helped to form and shape what became the American experience. This is a continuing evolution, yes, but not towards the consumer culture that is devouring the United States alive. Instead, we're learning more from the living traditions that brought our ancestors success and prosperity while still keeping security in the home and the hearth.

Christopher: Isn't one advantage is that you have a great many sources of material right here in the United States, in fact in the State of Pennsylvania?

Rob: Absolutely. We are one of very few ethnic groups in the United States who can visit the graves of eight, nine, ten, or even more of our direct ancestors. The connection to the land is very strong and is actually growing stronger. However, Pennsylvania is only one source of mate-

rials. Maryland, Ohio, Ontario, Michigan, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and other states have long had stable Deitsch communities. In some of those areas we can find traditions or lore that survived but went extinct in Pennsylvania.

Christopher: Haven't you added a dictionary of terms used in your Path?

Rob: Yes. It is called "*A Dictionary of Urglaawe Terminology*" and is available on Lulu.com. Numerous Deitsch words are used in Urglaawe practice, even in situations in which English is the primary language. It became important to provide a means for people to be able to find out what the terms mean.

Christopher: You come from a fairly closed culture, yet you don't seem to view this path that way.

Rob: I don't really see the Deitsch culture as closed. Isolated due to the language barrier and misunderstood because of sectarian codes, perhaps, but not really closed. I do not see Urglaawe as closed, either. It is up to the gods and goddesses to decide whom to call. While each Sipschaft or Freibesitz (freehold) can determine the most appropriate individuals to be a part of the organization, there is no exclusivity per se.

Urglaawe social order is based on the concept of Fruchsfriede, or the "peace of order." This is akin to the Heathen concept of frith. We owe frith, or a general

politeness and civility, to all of humanity simply because we are all human, and we all have a spark of the eternal in our soul complexes. However, we owe the first level of concern and most frith to our most nuclear families; second level of frith is to clans and friends. As one considers groupings farther removed from the nuclear family, less frith is owed. Therefore, I do not think it is closed because people can move among those groupings throughout our lives. A stranger becomes a friend or a friend becomes an in-law, and the level of frith owed to that person changes.

While Urglaawe is Heathenry conducted through the lens of the living Deutsch culture, we are not particularly worried about the origins of people. Our deities call whom they call.

Christopher: You seem to honor the masculine and the feminine in your yearly ceremonies. How do you do this?

Rob: Balance is a key element in Braucherei and in Urglaawe. Many of the Urglaawe observances have their roots in Braucherei practice. The masculine and the feminine are seen as equal, yet different, energies. Each is present in all of us and in our lives to varying degrees. The feminine energy is celebrated at Grundsaudaag, which is better known in English as Groundhog Day. On that day, Deutsch tradition was to allow the fire in the hearth to burn out and to begin a new fire with birch. Birch, as many of your readers will know, is strongly associated

with femininity, motherhood, and, in the Teutonic traditions, the goddess Frigg. At Grundsaudaag, we also create and pass the plant spirit of life to the Butzemann, who is created from the remnants of the prior year's harvest. The Butzemann is the activated scarecrow who watches out for his "children" throughout the growing season. This act of creation and the passing of the breath of life is another way of honoring motherhood. The Butzemann is the father of this year's crop, and the soil is the mother. Also, February 2 is the time of honoring female ancestors and family guardians (Idises).

The Butzemann also plays a role in the honoring of the masculine. When he is created and given the breath of life, he is given a name and is part of the lineage of the land he is protecting (see: <http://urglaawe.blogspot.com/2012/02/butzemann-naming-convention.html>). He is given offerings and is honored throughout the growing season. Allelieweziel (October 31) is the time to honor specifically the masculine energies and the contributions and sacrifices that males make for their communities. This recognition takes into account the culling of herds, particularly males, in order to ensure that there was ample food for the females and younger males to make it through the winter. The tradition from Braucherei is that the Butzemann must be released from his duties and burned sometime between Erntfescht, which happens at the autumn equinox, and Allelieweziel. As the Butzemann has a plant soul, his time is up at the end of

the growing season, and he will depart at Allelieweziel onto the Wild Hunt with Holle. There are “Verbots” (taboos) against allowing a Butzemann to remain at his post after Allelieweziel and also about reusing a Butzemann’s clothes. He must go to his end with his clothes on as a matter of respect. As he is burned, the community also honors the male ancestors and ancestral spirits.

Christopher: Your ancestry even has its own healing traditions. Isn’t this in the form of three types of healing?

Rob: There are multiple ways to answer this question. First off, Braucherei is aimed at healing the mind, the body, and the spirit. It also, however, involves using sympathetic healing, energetic healing, and physical healing. Due to attempts to suppress the Deitsch culture and pressure from national medical organizations to shut down traditional medicinal practices, the energetic and the sympathetic healing have a stronger presence in Braucherei in the modern era than physical healing does. The physical healing consists of herbal medicine and physical touch, laying of the hands, and massage.

Christopher: Now how is this healing tradition passed down?

Rob: Traditionally, Braucherei has been passed from mentor to apprentice alternating genders. The purpose of this is to maintain a balance between the genders. However, within family lines, the gender

issue did not matter. Thus, a father could teach a son. A woman could teach her sister, etc. Generally speaking, these traditions have not changed for the full scope of the practice. It was quite common, though, for people to know some Braucherei “first aid” in the form of chants, frontline medicinal herbs, etc., for use on the farm.

Christopher: I noted special mention of Holle? Care to tell us about her as a Goddess?

Rob: Despite the many centuries since the conversion from Heathenry to Christianity, several deities remained active in the practices of Hexerei and Braucherei. Even many Christians recognized the presence of these deities, even if they considered them to be spirits or saints. Included among these deities are Holle, Wudan (Odin), Dunner (Thor), Die Haerdziebin (Frigg), Ewicher Yeeger (Eternal Hunter), Weisskeppichi Fraa (White-Haired Woman), and, to a lesser extent, Ziu (Tyr), Berchta, Frey, and Freya. Scattered references or “connected dots” have led to some awareness of additional deities. In the absence of any contradictory information from within Deitsch or Continental German lore, Urglaawe draws knowledge from Scandinavian sources, too.

In Urglaawe, Holle is viewed as the Mother of the Deitsch nation. She is seen as the governess of the cycle of life, death, decay, and rebirth. She is associated with

heavy winds, spinning, spinning wheels, whirlwinds (spiral cycles again!), falling snow, geese, and elder, which bears her name (Hollerbeer or Hollebeer) in Deutsch. She is a compassionate goddess (as seen in the “fairy tale” of “Mother Holle” or “Frau Holle”), but she definitely likes order in the home.

In our traditions, Holle is the primary leader of the Wild Hunt, which begins at Allelueweziel (October 31, the representation of the “death” part of the cycle). The “hunt,” from the Urglaawe perspective, is after the souls of the deceased. Holle takes these souls and brings the eternal portions to her figurative mill to prepare them for their next life.

The Wild Hunt continues until Walpurgisnacht (April 30), when we observe Holle’s return to this realm. This is now the time of the rebirth of the land. On Walpurgisnacht, Urglaawer make their annual visit to one of several sacred sites associated with Holle. Primary among them is Hexenkopf, which is a mountain pillar located in Northampton County, Pennsylvania.

Encountering Holle in Braucherei work, particularly journey work, is rather common. She has appeared to me most often during work with souls that are lost or bound to the physical realm. Holle is a remarkable goddess, and I encourage folks who are curious about Her to investigate Her lore more deeply. She is known in Continental German sources, too, though some of their perceptions do differ

from what is known in our lore. Either way, though, She is awesome!

Christopher: What else does your path honor besides the gods and goddesses.

Rob: We honor ancestors and descendants and any number of living entities called “Wichde” in Deutsch or “wights” in English. Among the wights would be entities well known from folk tales and fairy tales: elves, dwarves, Idises (matriarchal ancestral spirits, sometimes seen as “fairy godmothers,” etc.). We do not, though, honor any entity that works to the disadvantage of the deities or of humanity, though negotiation and deals can be made with them.

We also honor the animal and plant realms here on Earth. This is part of the Stewardship virtue found in Urglaawe. From Braucherei lore, we know of a social contract (to use a Hobbesian term) among animals, plants, and humans. This contract allows for the ongoing advancement of each. We cultivate and nurture animals and plants, and they, in turn, feed us and each other. Unfortunately, for more than half of the population of the world, the responsibility for the advancement of the human consciousness has transferred from the individual or the community to centralized authorities. These centralized authorities are promising a blissful afterlife at the expense of the here and now, and, in many cases, they flatly state that human has dominion over every living thing on Earth. This statement, coupled with the

blissful afterlife, has led to an imbalance in the contract.

It is nearly impossible to escape the realities of Big Agro and Big Pharma, particularly when the economic structure is geared to help those industries to expand, but Urglaawer are encouraged to strive to honor the food we eat, tend to our land carefully and lovingly, and to work towards change. We're not talking about severe austerity or environmental extremism. We are talking about taking care of the living world around us so that the living world around us will be able to take care of us. This may sound like a New Age philosophy, but it is, in fact, an Old World mentality that has survived into the current era in the Deitsch culture.

Christopher: What are some of the online resources you have for people to learn about your tradition:

Rob: We have quite a few blogs and websites, including Distelfink Sippschaft's home site: <http://www.distelfink.org>. On <http://site.distelfink.org/Resources.html>, one may find a list of our publications, videos, related links, etc.

Folks within driving distance of Philadelphia or Reading, PA, may want to consider joining the Asatru and Urglaawe Meetup of PA/NJ/DE (<http://asatru.meetup.com/249>). We also have the New York and New Jersey Heathen Meetup (<http://asatru.meetup.com/266>).

Urglaawe and Distelfink Sippschaft each have a presence on Facebook. You may also add me (<http://www.facebook.com/robert.schreier>).

We recently started a new blog on Blanzheilkunst, or traditional Deitsch herbalism. This blog is at <http://blanzeschwetze.blogspot.com>. Please note the legal disclaimers posted there.

Also, Urglaawe is part of the tapestry of Heathenry. Folks who are interested in Heathenry may also want to look into The Troth (<http://www.thetroth.org>), which is a national organization. I am currently in the second year of a three-year term on The Troth's High Rede. The scholarly discussions and publications by The Troth are top notch. I cannot recommend them enough.

Christopher: Is there anything else that you would like our readers to know?

Rob: I'd like to mention a bit about symbols in the Deitsch culture and in Urglaawe. Most people are probably familiar with "hex signs" and associate them with the Deitsch. Many of the symbols in these signs are very old. For example, it is quite possible, if not probable, that the six-pointed rosette sign is drawn from the Hagal rune in the Younger Futhark. Both symbols even share similar meanings of banishment and transformation. Also, the swastika (Deitsch: Hokekreiz) which some see as a representation of those spiral cycles, appears in stylized forms in vari-

ous signs, too.

Color plays an important role in hex signs, in Braucherei, and in Urglaawe. The color use ranges from what colors are worn for certain types of Braucherei practice to color choices for Urglaawe ceremonies, including funerary rites.

Also while many folks are aware of the association of the Thor's Hammer with Heathenry, they may be puzzled by the juxtaposition of the Hammer with the Sickel. While the imagery appears to resemble the flag of the Soviet Union, that is not the purpose of the Sickel. Instead, Sickles were the tool that was carried by adherents to the cult of Holle. As Holle is a (if not the) primary deity of Urglaawe, we have chosen the Sickel of Holle (Holesichel) as one of our symbols.

We also have a modified version of the Might Oak hex sign (the center contains the Uruz rune rather than the eight-pointed geometric seasonal cycle symbol, though that symbol would be appropriate, too!). The modified sign represents the intention of asserting strength and longevity to Urglaawe. The Oak is also sacred to Dunder (Thor), whose power and protection we rely upon to help us to complete our work.

I'd also like to thank you, Christopher, for this opportunity, and I'd like to thank your readers for their interest!

The Dynion Mwyn and Y Tylwyth Teg Traditions Interview with Rhuddlwm Gawr

By Christopher Blackwell

Rhuddlwm Gawr was initiated into an old Welsh tradition of Dynion Mwyn and takes part in the American branch Y Tylwyth Teg. He also has also written a fair number of books on various aspects of the tradition and was kind enough to give me time for this interview.

Christopher: Could you give us a bit of background on yourself?

Rhuddlwm: I was born in a small Florida town and attended the University of Florida. I joined the US Marine Corps where I completed various computer, aviation, communications and radar courses. Upon my discharge, I worked in the Caribbean as a Electronics Field Engineer and then transferred to Europe where I worked with the US Air Force on Top Secret Nuclear weapons sites. I then returned to the US where I joined NASA as a field engineer. Over the next several years I was assigned to many government and private projects. In between jobs I attended the University of Maryland, Kennesaw State University and Graduated with a BLA in Environmental Design from the University of Georgia

Christopher: How did you come to end up in a tradition in Wales?

Rhuddlwm: It was on the Island of Majorca in the Mediterranean sea that I met my teacher Sarah and began my Quest for the Grail. At the completion of my assignment, I was asked to meet Sarah in England and we then traveled to Wales, where I studied and was initiated.

Christopher: What is **Y Dynion Mwyn**?

Rhuddlwm: **Y Dynion Mwyn**, means 'The Fair family' tradition and is derived from Welsh and Pictish religious sources as well as Druidic and witchcraft magickal practices.

Christopher: How far back does this tradition go and what people does it have ties to?

Rhuddlwm: The teachings evolved from an oral Faerie Tradition: "The Children of Dôn chose to stay in Wales after the invasion of the Celts, and took refuge under the hills." The Religious Tradition of Dynion Mwyn was revitalized in the 50s and 60s by Taliesin einion Vawr a Dynion Mwyn High Priest, in North Wales. He combined elements of Pictish Witchcraft, Knights Templar philosophy, Druidry teachings, Etruscan religious ritual, NROOGD magickal ritual and Kibbo Kift ceremony in his workings.

The original Mother Organization, **Dynion Mwyn**, was created between 1282 and 1525, by descendants of the Bards of Prince Llewellyn, the last true prince of Wales.

Christopher: How and when does **Y Tylwyth Teg** come to be founded?

Rhuddlwm: In 1966, I was initiated by Sarah and Taliesin einion Vawr into the Welsh Tribe of Dynion Mwyn, "The Gentle Folk", near Betws-y-Coed, in North Wales. I was given the name Rhuddlwm Gawr by the elders of the Dynion Mwyn tradition, and told that I was to return to the United States and begin to teach the Craft of **Y Tylwyth Teg** (the Clan of "The Fairy Folk"). After returning to the United States, I worked on NASA's Apollo Manned Lunar Project. I began teaching a Witchcraft class in a small Houston bookstore.

Christopher: What is your position in these traditions and how long have you been a member?

Rhuddlwm: I was initiated in 1966 in Wales so I have been a member since then. I am a Ninth Level Elder.

Christopher: How many books have you written about different aspects of the tradition?

Rhuddlwm: Twenty-Three.

Christopher: Where can people find out more about these books and where to buy them?

Rhuddlwm: They can be bought at www.amazon.com or at www.IUniverse

Christopher: Are these traditions open to new seekers and where can people find out more about them, what is required and any costs involved?

Rhuddlwm: Classes are open to those seekers who complete a questionnaire and take a test that determines if a seeker can complete the work required. We have one-on-one classes in Georgia and several other states. We also have a correspondence course which we teach on a sliding scale.

If a person wishes to know more about the tradition they can go to <http://www.dynionmwyn.net> and browse thru 2000 pages, they can go to wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dynion_Mwyn they can go to http://www.witchvox.com/va/dt_va.html?a=usga&c=trads&id=8397

Christopher: Is there anything else you would like our readers to know?

Rhuddlwm: We are High Priests and Priestesses of Dynion Mwyn...a Witchcraft Tradition you will read about in the section below.

WHAT IS THE WELSH TRADITION OF DYNION MWYN?

The Welsh Tradition of Dynion Mwyn is the parent Grove/Coven of several groups all over the world including Wales. Our original Coven was founded near Betws-y-coed, Wales. Our U.S. Coven's focus is on the teaching of ancient Welsh myster-

ies with a healthy dose of information from other sources as well. (See http://www.witchvox.com/va/dt_va.html?a=usga&c=trads&id=8397)

We are a Pre-Gardnerian Traditional Witchcraft Religion. We claim a mystical lineage from the Bards of the last true Prince of Wales, Llewellyn Y Llyw Olaf, who died in 1282. We know we are descended from ancient Covens in Wales. A North Wales Coven was established in the fifties from the remnants of what was called the Wynne tradition or Dynion Mwyn.

Two Wentworth covens were established near Cardiff and outside London England, in the sixties, by Patricia, the sister of Taliesin Wynne, our Founder. A Coven and Grove was also established in Central Wales. After an extended illness, Taliesin, one of two surviving elders of the Dynion Mwyn Welsh Family Gwyddon (Witchcraft) tradition, died quietly in his sleep.

Taliesin, whose surname was Wynne or Winn, was born in the forests of North Wales in 1927. During his first thirteen years, because of his father's government position, the family traveled throughout Europe. They returned to England in 1938, and the children were sent to live with relatives in Wales. In September, 1940, their father and mother were killed in the Blitz bombing of London during the Battle of Britain. He and his sister were taken in and raised by an uncle and auntie

in a small village in the North of Wales. It was here they learned of his families heritage of Druidism and Witchcraft as they met Y Tylwyth Teg (Welsh fairies) at Fairy Ring near Betws y Coed, and swam with the Gwragedd Annwn, (Water Faeries, Gwagedd Annwfr, Gwraig, Ladies of the Lake, Lake Maidens, Water Maidens, Morgans, Morgens.)

It is considered that the Welsh OtherWorld of Annwn (sometimes known as Annwfn or Annwvyn) can be reached beneath the surface of certain lakes and streams. Here, in their submerged towns and villages, dwell the Gwragedd Annwn, stunning golden-haired Faerie maidens. They are not restricted to this watery abode, however, and there are several tales that tell of love affairs and marriages between these Water Elven and mortal men. Taliesin says in his journal this was the happiest time of his life and that he had many conversations with the Water Elves.

In 1965, Rhuddlwm Gawr, an American, met Sarah Wentworth while on holiday in Majorca. She invited him to visit her in London and meet members of the "Elder Faith"; those who practiced the Welsh tradition of Witchcraft, as she called it. Intrigued, he took her up on her offer and met her in 1966. After a day of discussion, they drove to Wales where he was introduced to Taliesin and other family members. After he completed his Craft studies in Wales, he returned to the United States and established a Coven in Landonver Maryland. Go to :

<http://www.dynionmwyn.net/Origin/Origin.html>

If you wish to determine if our tradition of the Old Religion is what you are looking for, or if you are interested in Witchcraft because you have reached out to friends or acquaintances who are Witches or Pagans and tried to find out more.....We are here for you.

If you came here because you are interested in Witchcraft for excitement, wild sex, large silver pentacles, black gothic clothing, turning your boy/girl friend or spouse into a toad or being self-indulgence, hhhmmmmmm! That's not to say that Witches don't like excitement, large silver pentacles, black gothic clothing, turning their boy/girlfriend into their slave and having fantastic sex (after all there are some wild Witches out there!), but that's not the best reason for studying Witchcraft.

Welsh Witchcraft is about Enlightenment, Religion, Healing, Magick, Knowledge, and yes - Power, but it is also about your Spiritual Growth. If you are not interested in your own Spiritual Growth, and not interested in doing all the work involved in becoming a Witch, put this letter down, and read it when you are.

Once you start on this path, it will become an important part of your life. Being a Witch is a vocation, just as being a Doctor, Nurse, Architect, Engineer, or for that matter, the Priest of any other religion is,

because that is what you are going to be: a Priest or a Priestess, who will be legally authorized to perform marriages. In Christianity, a minister or Priest must work very hard to become the leader of a congregation. A Witch Priest or Priestess must work just as hard and just as long or even longer.

Once you are a Welsh Witch, you will always “know” things and understand things others won’t. You will feel things more. You will be able to heal others. You will be able to use your sexual energy to make things happen. You will be able to perform magickal rituals. You will truly walk in the other persons shoes.

Being a Witch is about service to the Great Spirit - the Lord and Lady, so you have to go through spiritual growth and learning. And as in learning any new Way there will be some discomfort, having to relearn some facts and knowledge. After all if there is No Pain: there will be No Gain.

Some people make statements like: “Witches are born not made”, and others claim that “Witches are made, not born”. Neither is totally true. Yes, psychic ability does come easier to some people, but the majority of Witches learn the Knowledge of the Craft through hard work. If you can’t work hard, you can’t be a Witch.

As a student, you will acquire knowledge through study of the Art through an ongoing craft structure preserved, modified,

and continued in various forms and folkways from the Ancient days of our Pictish and Druidic ancestors, and before. Has it remained unchanged? Of course not.

Everything changes but the truth never does. We keep what we find works and store away that which does not. You will learn that rituals and spells are personal. Some work for you and some work for others, but not every spell is for everyone. You must learn the basic rites and rituals that work for everyone and then create those special rituals and spells that work only for you. How do you do that? Through work and more work and study!!! You never stop learning that there is always more to learn, particularly about yourself.

Discipline and responsibility are cornerstones of our expectations. We require them no less from our students than we do from ourselves. That is why we screen all who come to us looking for initiation into the Welsh Gwyddon. We will do a psychometric reading of their photo and their handwriting.

Always keep in mind every true Witchcraft tradition strives to promote certain behavior from its members. In Wicca, which is a distant cousin of Witchcraft, they have a saying that perfect love and perfect trust are promoted among its members. WE, on the other hand, will also expect you to be totally HONORABLE and RELIABLE.

If you can convince us you are sincere,

and ready to work, we will give you the opportunity to begin training. This instruction will introduce you to the basic philosophy, magickal rites, rituals and practices of our religion. It will also give you a great deal of occult and metaphysical knowledge.

Years ago, during a seminar, one of our elders said:

“When I became a Welsh Witch, suddenly I could see that my life held infinite possibilities. My life became satisfying to me on all planes of consciousness. I eventually gained the power to move in other mental dimensions and realms of being. I attained communication with spiritual entities of different life forms, and developed new and magickal gifts within myself. I attained certain powers of ESP. I received knowledge and ability to bring about almost anything I really wanted in my life. I now experience forms of pleasures whose very existence was unknown to me before. I have conquered fear. I have learned about the ordered pattern behind apparently unrelated things. The Mysteries were revealed to me.”

What will YOU get out of the study of Witchcraft? Which Witchcraft is that? There are literally hundreds of groups who claim to practice Witchcraft and will gladly take your money and energy. We are sending you this because if you are a true seeker, you deserve to access the truth and not just a made up “look-a-like”.

If you happen to choose Dynion Mwyn as

your path, you may gain the Power the elder was describing above. You will certainly experience the mysteries if you are open to them. Its all up to you.

For our part, we will devote as much time and effort as it takes to help you become a Witch, High Priest/ess and a Representative of Y Dynion Mwyn if we see there is potential within you; but we will also expect certain things from you: we will expect you to complete your lessons in a reasonable length of time. If we ask you to return an exam in a month, we don't mean two.

Because you will be taught in person by an individual teacher, we will expect you to give him or her your complete attention as well as the courtesy and respect due an elder of the Craft. Therefore we will expect loyalty and honor to our Tradition to be your first mottoes. These two words are part of the Twenty-Three Tenets (or Virtues) you will be taught in your first year. Our tradition has initiated thousands of Witches, trained hundreds of Elders, High Priests and High Priestesses, and started many Covens. But even though Witchcraft is a popular religion, this knowledge is not for everyone's eyes. Some people cannot handle the truth, or the power of Magick. You don't share a loaded machine gun with a five-year-old child. There is AWE-SOME Power in Witchcraft, but it must be used responsibly That is why you will take an oath of secrecy before you are initiated. With that said, there are many impostors claiming to be Witches. And

several claiming to teach a tradition with an unbroken lineage.

Our Elders have developed a study program available to selected seekers. During your participation in these studies, you will be given tools to understand Nature and all its myriad aspects. As you learn these mysteries of Nature you will begin to understand the ways of Natural Magick. We regard Magick as an integral part of our workings because Magick and psychic development are the tools we use to understand the Universe and all living things, and to change the conditions of our life. We believe that Magick is the essence of creativity, that it is the energy of the Goddess and the nature spirits.

We will show you how to live in harmony with Nature and its forces. In our teachings, we emphasize the creative aspects of the God and Goddess, the Great Spirit, and stress the respect you must have for these forces.

You will learn various techniques of obtaining Psychic Inner awareness, through such techniques as meditation and rituals. This process will help you attain a higher form of consciousness, eventually leading to Spiritual Enlightenment.

This training will enable you to discover a personal relationship with the Lord and Lady of Nature, unlike anything you have ever experienced. This worship of the God and Goddess, and the acknowledgment of their seasonal influences, is the heart and

soul of our philosophy.

If you complete this training and become part of our Outer Circle, you will find an empathetic and supportive community, and you may then become a WITCH! A Witch has not only mastered the above studies but is also working to become a High Priest or High Priestess in the service and worship of The Great Spirit, which takes the form of the Mother Goddess and the Father God in all their many forms and names. You will eventually teach the knowledge of the Mighty Ones, and live by the philosophy of the Laws of the Craft.

Please read the following statements. If you agree to most of the following, then you are Witch material. (Thank you Ed Fitch for providing the basis for this list)

1. You are a responsible person, or you have parental consent.
2. You can honor both goddess and god and seek a balance in your life.
3. You are not ashamed of your mind, body, or spirit.
4. You tend toward the mystical and are intuitive.
5. You prefer lineage and tradition to eclecticism and politically correct, feel-good rites.
6. You have no problem with learning the ancient mysteries over time, not instantaneously.
7. You are ready to be both a leader and a follower.
8. You are ready to be involved in a group with a long history.

9. You are ready to commit years, even decades to this path.
10. You are not a collector of initiations.
11. You do not join a group and then expect to alter its system, tradition, language, and philosophies to fit your low expectations or faulty knowledge.
12. You are attracted to joining a Witchcraft tradition whose members are interested in learning, not being the Witch Queen or King.
13. You are intelligent.
14. You have a healthy attitude toward total sexuality and are not a prude or puritan.
15. You keep your promises and do not break oaths, EVER.
16. You can be silent even when sorely tempted to speak out and correct others.
17. You are ready to make an old Craft tradition an important part of your life.
18. You feel it's important to observe the turning of the wheel of the year.
19. You can learn to practice Magick and observe the seasons, and know when the moon is waning or waxing.
20. You read a lot of books.
21. You are healthy.
22. You are not addicted to drugs or alcohol.
23. You don't whine, make excuses, or pass the buck.
24. Others consider you as an "old soul" or one who is wise beyond their years.
25. You work for a living, are supported by your parents, or have an independent income.
26. You want to work in a Welsh and/or Celtic tradition primarily.
27. You are willing to train for a year and a day and can accept hierarchy as necessary to development.
28. You seek structure in your spiritual life but you can also be spontaneous and inventive.
29. You are inquisitive about or have experimented with reincarnation, tarot, runes, astrology, psychometry, metaphysics, energy projection, healing, sacred dance, etc.
30. You enjoy reading the mythology and folk tales of other countries, in particular, the stories of the seven Celtic nations, Britain, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Brittany, Isle of Man, and Cornwall.
31. You feel you would want to work with both sun and moon magickal energies.
32. You are particularly attracted to the Welsh Goddess Cerridwen after reading "The Mabinogion" by Lady Charlotte Guest
33. You are ready for a deepening of your soul.
34. You have recently experienced a calling to Welsh or Celtic Witchcraft.
35. You know the difference between Wicca and Witchcraft - or can learn.
36. You know what a fluffy bunny pagan is and you don't want to be one.

Read the above 36 statements three times. Are you ready to learn?

Our training will introduce you to basic philosophy, magickal rites, healing rituals and religious practices of our Coven. When you complete the course of study, you may be invited to join a working co-

ven near your area, if there are none; or if there is a waiting list, we will encourage you to join an on-line study group or form a study coven under our direction. If you continue with the study coven until you are initiated, you will eventually become a High Priest or High Priestess.

You will at first be apprenticed to an elder Mentor for any help you may need. Your study in this Outer Circle has no time limit, but it is up to you to complete the requirements for initiation at the suggested pace. You will not advance to the Inner Circle by cutting corners and completion of the requirements will not mean an automatic and instant initiation into the Inner Circle. That will come when your personal teacher has given us his or her approval.

Your ranking elders are the High Priest and High Priestess. According to traditional Witch Laws, their word is law in the coven, since they have years of experience in these matters. They are assisted by other senior members of the coven or grove, whose rank will be explained to you at a later time. These officers answer to a council of Elders made up of High Priests and High Priestesses of third level or higher of other Dynion Mwyn covens.

HOW WE SELECT STUDENTS:

First, you will fill out the questionnaire and attach a photo, to enable us to do a psychic reading. We will prepare a horoscope from your month, day, year, time, and place of birth (you will receive a copy) .

Second, we will then invite you to complete an 8 Week Intro class in the study of Witchcraft or a Home Study Course.

Third, during those classes, we will find out more about you and you will find out more about us.

Fourth, after you satisfactorily complete the Introductory Class or Introductory lessons, you will be invited to be consecrated into the Craft and begin your Intermediate studies for a year and a day.

Fifth, after a year and a day of successful study, if you are ready, you will be Adopted into Welsh/Celtic Witchcraft. The Adoption ritual initiates you and you are then a full fledged Welsh Gwyddon, a Celtic Witch and Priest/ess.

DURING YOUR FIRST TWO YEARS OF STUDY YOU WILL BEGIN TO MASTER THE FOLLOWING ARTS AND SCIENCES OF WITCHCRAFT:

Western Magickal Mysteries - Herbology - Astrology - I Ching - Casting Runes - Tarot - Numerology - Palmistry - Meditation - Finding your Path - Cosmology (Religion) - Welsh Magick and Witchcraft

Earth Energy - Earth Magick - Chakra Cleansing - Astral Projection - Energy Projection - Healing Methods - Trance Channeling - Development of the Will - Shamanism - The Body of Light - Polarity Healing - Quantum Physics and Magick

Crystal Magick - Finding your Soul Mate
 - Sex Magick - Tantra - Rituals of Merlin
 - Alchemy - Finding Your Magickal Name -
 The Children of Light - Finding your Power
 Points - Synchronicity

2012 to 2023 - Spells - Charms - Incense
 and Oils - Candle Magick - Voodoo or Vo-
 doun - Light Magick

Those are just a few of the subjects you
 may eventually master.

DISCOVERING THE GRAIL

Legend says our tradition includes the Welsh Mysteries that were passed down to Y Dynion Mwyn from an ancient priesthood. This legend also concerns the search for the Mystical Grail of Immortality. For this reason, we believe Welsh Witchcraft, is one of the world's oldest Mystery traditions. Although the principal legends and secrets containing the language, symbols and philosophy of the tradition, have changed little over the centuries, they have changed. This legacy embodies our customs, history and religious sacraments. It has changed by making its precepts more understandable to you in this modern age, and we are always experimenting to see if there are better ways of doing things.

Ancient Pictish Witches and Welsh Druids passed on their spiritual, mystical and magickal sexual knowledge of the mysteries and beauty of Nature to our forefathers over a thousand years ago, and until this

day it has existed in Wales. In 1967 it was also brought to the U.S. by a craft elder, and we have dozens of groups throughout the States..

ETHICS - DO THEY MATTER?

We teach and practice the highest form of ethics. We have to. We are visible to both the pagan and mundane world. We expect our students and members to reflect the same concern for ethics we do. If you don't understand the definition of Ethics, look it up.

A word of advice before we go any further - all Witchcraft and Wiccae traditions have their enemies just as other spiritual groups may. Fundamental Christians represent one kind of enemy, but there are others. There are always those who would pretend to study the Craft, but cannot pass the written or oral requirements, or maintain the discipline and standards of learning that the Welsh Tradition demands. They sometimes try to destroy what they cannot have by slander and defamation.

Also beware of so called Pagan groups and web sites which trash other groups. Well known and ethical authors and leaders do not trash other groups. If they trash anyone else, they are not Witches or Wiccans. They are not honorable, and they are not Pagans. They are Jealous of a groups success, therefore they try to keep others from contacting them.

No, the search for truth is not all sweetness and light and there are snakes in

every forest.

One of the most common mistakes a Pagan neophyte makes, especially those who come from abusive religious backgrounds, is assuming that all Pagans are more moral, more spiritual, more knowledgeable, more honest and trustworthy people than those of their former faith. Wouldn't that be great?

Unfortunately the truth is that some Pseudo-Pagans, Pseudo-Wiccans, Pseudo-Heathens, etc tell lies to get your money, use your power, commit theft and possibly worse. While we can all wish that the above things were not true of anyone in our communities...unfortunately they are - just as they are in other religious communities.

So in practical terms, what does this mean? It means that being a real Witch doesn't have anything to do with letting someone take advantage of you. It means you can follow your heart and your gut, and it means you can tell people to buzz off and feel no guilt.

Who you communicate with in Facebook, YAHOO, Second Life, AOL, RL and on the web is your decision alone. But, you should never feel obligated to continue speaking to someone simply because they share or claim to share your faith. It's also important to remember that you don't have to like everyone for the same reason.

Yes, that's right. You don't have to like

someone, talk to them, or hang out with them just because they say they share your religion. Just because you choose a new religion doesn't mean you've lost the right to choose your friends.

If your religion makes all of those decisions for you who you can talk to, be friends with, how you dress, who you have sex with, it isn't a religion, it's probably a CULT.

Cults don't want you to think for yourself. Cult leaders do not want you to think for yourself, they want to control you for some kind of personal gain.

A Real Witch leader will want you to think for yourself. The (real) Witch friends you make will want the same thing. Those of us who are real Witches find those people who can't think for themselves to be terribly boring company.

Don't be afraid to tell someone you don't like not to contact you again. And you don't have to be nice about it. It's far more important that you make yourself clear.

Above all, be smart when meeting new people. It's really a lot of fun to meet with groups in real life, especially when you may have been previously limited to the Internet for interaction with other Pagans. But don't meet in private.

Bring your own transportation, and don't give your address or phone number until you believe that you've established that

the people that you've met are worthy of your trust.

YES, Ethics Matter.

YOUR TRAINING

How will you learn? The methods used in your training will be manifold: you will receive written lessons as well as oral teachings. You will experience hands-on training and trial by ordeal. These methods will serve to strengthen and educate you in different ways. You will find that as you ultimately reach higher levels of involvement, seekers will come to you for help and instruction, and you must be strong in the ways of the craft in order to assist them.

Another facet of your training will be when your teachers place you in situations to gauge your reactions. These are tests of character and of courage. You should see them as being as much a benefit for you as for us. The greatest power involves knowing yourself and your limitations, and then striving to exceed them. These tests have proven difficult for many students in the past, but they will not harm you.

Have you changed your mind? Have we discouraged you yet? Still with us? If you are and you still feel you would like to continue, then you should take the next step on your search.

If you are accepted, your first instruction will take the form of a 8 - 10 class Intro Course and then you will complete an

exam; after which you will be enrolled in a Intermediate Course until such time as your elder feels you are ready. Most correspondence will be by e-mail. Most direct teaching will be one on one by a qualified teacher.

All right. You've read this article, and you want to continue. What do you do now? If you are still interested in learning more about our way, go to the following sites and read all information contained therein:

The Wales Dynion Mwyn homepage at <http://www.dynionmwyn.net/dynionmwyn/dynionmwyn23.html>

The Welsh Witchcraft page at <http://www.dynionmwyn.net/welsh1.html>

The Dynion Mwyn Origins page at <http://dynionmwyn.net/Origin/Origin.html>

Welsh Witchcraft beliefs at <http://www.dynionmwyn.net/beliefs.html>

The history of Dynion Mwyn in Wales and the UK at <http://www.dynionmwyn.net/SecretHistory.html>

A Craft Dictionary at <http://www.dynionmwyn.net/glossary.html>

Descriptions of Religious Sabbats at <http://www.dynionmwyn.net/wheel.html>

Frequently asked questions at <http://www.dynionmwyn.net/wfwfaq.html>

A shaman page on sacred sexuality at

<http://www.dynionmwyn.net/sacredsex.html>

A Tantra Page at <http://www.dynionmwyn.net/tantra.html>

In parting, we have a blessing for you: “May the powers, of the Earth Mother, guard and sustain you on your Quest for Enlightenment!” Y Gwir Yn Erbyn Y Byd....”Truth against the World!” “May the gods lead you to the right path!” When we part, we always say:

Blessed Be!

Rogue Priest

On a trip to meet the Gods

Interview with Drew Jacob

By Christopher Blackwell

I get suggestions from a lot of different people. This time it was about Drew Jacob on an adventure, a long distant trip on foot and by bicycle after leaving his job and home. Everyone enjoys a good trek so I thought I would ask Drew about what he was doing.

Christopher: Could you give us a bit of back ground about yourself?

Drew: I believe that a small group of people working together have the power to change the world. Often, their journey starts for personal reasons. To me, travel is a spiritual practice, and adventure is a tool for self-transformation. I’m putting my beliefs to the test by walking across the

Christopher: How did you find yourself following the Irish Gods?

Drew: When I was 14 my parents encouraged me to look at different religions. I ended up getting a book about the druids. I now know that book is full of inaccurate information, but the introduction was so beautiful it had me sold. I have a very close relationship with the déithe.

However, I am not exclusive. As a polytheist I follow, serve and adore the gods of many cultures.

Christopher: You mentioned this while saying that you didn’t consider yourself Pagan. Could you explain your meaning?

Drew: I’m a polytheist. I don’t have much in common with most Pagans and when that label gets put on me it causes confusion. In my interfaith work I have a close relationship with the Pagan community, but I myself am not Pagan.

Christopher: How long have you been considering this trip, and why by foot and by bicycle?

Drew: Always. As long as I can remember, to travel around South America has been my dream.

I believe in learning from cultures and religions as I go. Humanity’s diversity is our greatest strength. Traveling slowly allows me to really meet people, and to explore places and communities I would never find

going by bus or plane.

Christopher: What finally got you started? Where did you start?

Drew: I started by enduring ridicule, disappointment and warnings. I decided to live my dream, and all my friends and family were horrified. Yours will be too. They worry for your safety, your security, your future; they love you. And, they are a little jealous.

Nothing will ever get you started journeying. All of our fiction tells us that we'll get a call to action, a hero's call that will pull us out of our humdrum life and push us onto the road to adventure. But no owl is coming. There's no prophesy. Each of us must be out own hero's call.

I started by having a dream, making a plan and setting a date. I was scared the day I left and many days since. But I can feel the wind behind me, doing what I love. I hope other people seek out their fear, too.

Christopher: As you don't have a job, how do you survive?

Drew: I survive by writing. I write articles on a freelance basis. Other travelers do freelance design, programming, coding, marketing, grant-writing, or web development; work for an airline or cruise ship; make art, e-books or music; save up for years between travels; work odd jobs on the road; or start their own business.

There are many ways to afford to travel.

Christopher: In your blog you mention that your travels have already changed you beliefs. Could you give us some idea in what way that they have changed?

Drew: When the body moves the mind moves. Changing your surroundings will change who you are. Travel is a process of eternally challenging what you know, what you believe, and even what you want.

It's made me much better at questioning my own beliefs and living with uncertainty. The gods may not be real, you know. It's okay not to be sure.

It's also taught me true love for our sacred world. Everything about the world is precious, even the sunburn and the thorns and the thunderstorms. The blood on my elbow when I fell from my bike. I delight in small pleasures, and appreciate the pains and agonies of life as part of a beautiful whole.

Christopher: How have people reacted to you and your trip on the road?

Drew: This trip has taught me that humanity is basically good. Travel gives you a strong instinct for who to trust, and I've met friends of all kinds. Often they're unlikely friends, people I would never have met in my past house-and-a-job lifestyle.

Most people are surprised and impressed

with my adventure, which is humbling because I really haven't done much. I'm just following my dream.

One thing that comes up again and again is they want to know how I "afford" to travel. There's a suspicious moment where they think I have a trust fund or something. When I tell them I work to travel, they relax and like me. This is unsettling – what if I did have a trust fund? Would that make me a bad person?

Christopher: How far have you traveled so far? Where are you?

Drew: I started on July 4 at the source of the Mississippi River. I followed the River all the way to New Orleans, roughly 1800 miles. I will continue on through Texas, Mexico, Central America and South America all the way to the end of the Amazon River in Brazil. It will be 9,000 miles or so.

Christopher: Why have you stopped and what are you doing doing your stay?

Drew: I never stop. Every day I'm exploring. But rest is part of adventure, too. A nap becomes sweeter in between fighting jaguars and climbing temples.

Along my way I'll frequently pause in a community. Sometimes, like here in New Orleans, it will be a sabbatical of several months – a chance to learn something new and focus on my most meaningful writing.

Christopher: When do you start traveling again? Any particular places you want to pass through?

Drew: In the Bayou in June there's a ceremony on a bridge to protect the city from hurricanes. All my Vodou friends will see me there laughing and dancing, and then I'll disappear. Everyone in New Orleans says I won't leave, I'll stay, I love it here too much. They're right, I do love it, but I'll still disappear in the rains of St. John's Day.

Christopher: How much longer do you think the trip will take and where will you end up?

Drew: It will take years. Statistically, I'll end up dead from violence, disease or mishap. I prefer to think that one day, years from now, a single tanned and wounded gringo on a log raft will drift into Rio de Janeiro, a peaceful smile on his face, an Alexander's worth of danger behind him, a few long-trusting friends waiting on a bridge with coffee. I'd like that.

No matter where my trip finishes, I believe I will end up in a place of self-knowledge that leaves me fully at peace. Then I can close my eyes without regret.

Christopher: How can people keep up with your travels and is there anyway that they can help?

Drew: I really like traveling companions, and the digital kind are more than wel-

come. I release a new dispatch every Wednesday on <http://roguepriest.net/>

If you want to support my work, please pre-order my novella *Lúnasa Days*. You can find out more on Rogue Priest. I'm also open to actual, in-the-flesh traveling companions. If you want to walk, bike and paddle a few hundred miles, or wander for any length of time, you should e-mail me at drew@roguepriest.net. No promises.

Christopher: Will you eventually write a book about this trip?

Drew: I believe I will. If I live long enough and it seems right, I will.

Maybe it's a story best left told by others.

Christopher: Is there anything else that you would like to say to our readers?

Drew: Don't be afraid. The world has threats and losses, but the spark of heroism burns in every one of us. We carry our gods, and wherever we go a million generations are behind us. Trust in humanity, and in your dreams, and fearlessly ride the wind of fate.

Green Egg and the Green Egg Radio Hour

Interview with editor and publisher Ariel Monserrat

By Christopher Blackwell

One of the oldest Pagan publications is **Green Egg**, part of the Church of All Worlds. Green Egg has closed down and reincarnated twice within my lifetime, my first experience with it was as a glossy professional magazine and now as a E-zine but also with a hour radio show on Blog Radio. Ariel Monserrat is the editor and publisher of Green Egg and I thought who better to fill us in with what is happening with this old, yet new reinvented, Pagan tradition.

Christopher: Could you give us a bit of back ground about yourself?

Ariel: Yes. I was born and raised in Los Angeles, CA but left as soon as I could. I come from a highly conservative political family; my dad was one of Reagan's main advisors and worked on his presidential campaign to get him elected. My brother just finished his terms as an assemblyman in California and will be soon running for state senator.

I'm exactly the opposite, I'm a raving liberal who is far left. It wasn't easy growing up in this family, especially since I was adopted into it at age 6 and was always quite different from them. But I did learn to be politically active and to be well-read on political topics. I search out and read the news ev-

eryday for several hours so I can know how our world is being shaped and what needs to be changed or improved.

I've lived in several different states for short times, but mostly I lived in Northern California for 30 years before moving here to the Tennessee mountains 8 years ago.

I was a flight attendant for a major airline for 6 years back in the late 1970's and early 1980's, which allowed me to travel all over the world and having some amazing experiences. I've spent time in the Brazilian jungle, had my appendix removed in Moscow in 1977 when it was still the Soviet Union.

After leaving the airlines, I went back to school to get a graduate degree in psychology and was a psychotherapist for 15 years before moving to Tennessee. My husband, Tom Donohue, and I retired 8 years ago and moved here because it was far more affordable than California.

We live in a very rural farming community that is a lot like Mayberry. We have 6,000 people in the whole county and we love it here, it's absolutely beautiful. Living here allows me to be in constant communication with wildlife and Nature in general. This is one of the most biologically diverse areas on the planet and the Appalachians are the oldest mountain range on the earth. I frequently have conversations with lizards, butterflies, bees, frogs, toads, deer and lots of other wildlife and I've learned a lot from all the critters and plants here.

I've been polyamorous for almost 20 years and it's a lifestyle that works very well for me and also for my husband of 10 years, Tom Donohue. We don't get a chance much to practice it way out here in the boonies but we do each have our lovers of many years, including Oberon and Morning Glory Zell-Ravenheart.

Christopher: When and why did you become Pagan? What path do you follow?

Ariel: I don't really have an official path but I do consider myself Pagan and a (mostly) solitary witch. I was an apprentice to Oberon Zell-Ravenheart, who I learned a lot from. He taught me how to think magickally and that asking the right questions is very important. I still consider him my mentor and of course a very dear friend and lover.

How I became Pagan is an interesting story. About 20 years ago, I was looking for a way to unite sexuality and spirituality into a spiritual path. I had no idea where I might find such a thing or how it would work but something deep inside of me felt that I needed to pursue this search.

Shortly afterwards, I was in a bookstore, walking by the magazine rack. One magazine leaped out at me and the headline on it was "sex and spirituality" which of course immediately got my attention. I didn't even open up the magazine, I just bought it and took it home and read it cover to cover. It strike a major chord with me.

There was an ad in it for a Pagan gather-

ing, called Ancient Ways. The name intrigued me and I knew I needed to check it out. This was 1996 and as soon as I arrived at the festival, I knew this was my path, the one I'd been searching for. The name of the magazine, of course, was Green Egg. I had no idea, of course, at the time, how important Green Egg was going to become to me.

Christopher: You mentioned to me that you take issue with the media image of the Baby Boomer Generation.

Ariel: Yes, I am a Baby Boomer and grew up in Los Angeles, where much of the hippie movement was taking place. I lived on Los Feliz Blvd, which was only a mile or 2 from Griffith Park and the Theosophical Society headquarters. Every weekend, there would be a love-in and I saw all the hippies going down our street on their way to the love-ins.

These days, I see a lot of Baby Boomer bashing on the internet. The mainstream media and the powers that be have convinced the younger generations that we were nothing but a bunch of stoned, naïve hippies who never bathed and are now responsible for the mess that the world is in.

The truth is that, we were the most activist generation in modern history in this country. We fought for women's reproductive rights, including the legalization of abortion; we fought for civil rights and some even risked their lives to go to the South and fight for integration. There was also the fight for

LGBTG civil rights, the whole Stonewall affair of course taking place in 1969. We also fought to get corporal punishment out of the schools. We also started the environmental movement. Then there was the Vietnam War, which the Baby Boomers ended by protesting. We also ended the draft at that time as well. We thought that the war in Vietnam was a big scam and that we had no right to be there. History has proven us to be right, in fact.

We fought and won all these battles, some even dying for the cause such as the students at Kent State who were shot by the National Guard for merely protesting. And we can't forget the heroes who went to the South to fight for civil rights and were killed, while others were beaten almost to death.

There were also many young people who opposed their parents regarding the Vietnam War. Our parents thought we were shirking our responsibility to our country, and that we were just lazy, unappreciative kids who didn't understand anything. In reality, we were the best-educated and most intelligent generation to come along in a very long time; this is backed up by research and statistics. We knew that our job was to overturn the old order, expose hypocrisy and lies and create a better future for all Americans, not just a few.

We also exposed the government and the powers that be for what they were; greedy power mongers who didn't have the best interests of the American people at heart. After we'd done all this, of course, the gov-

ernment had to find a way to shut us down or they would have lost their power and become only straw men. So they have vilified us ever since.

When I lived in the San Francisco Bay area, I went to many protests and marched alongside many younger people, who were in their twenties. They understood what our generation went through and they looked to us for guidance.

Unfortunately, the rest of the younger generations, don't see this and so they blame us. The truth is, we fought like hell, we won many battles and laid a good foundation for future generations. Sadly, other forces have undone much of our work; but we are still here, still fighting battles for civil rights, an end to war, etc. Many of us still go to protests and many others of us are writing about all these issues and putting them up on the internet, to educate and expose what's really happening in our country.

I believe we need the younger generations and we need to work together to accomplish our goals of true freedom for all and government by the people. It was the Millennials who got out and turned the tide in last November's election.

They got out the vote and ensured that the 5 Republicans who made absolutely idiotic statements about rape and women's reproductive rights didn't get elected; they also voted in a lot of LGBTG people, including Tammy Baldwin, the first openly lesbian woman to serve in the Senate, as well

as many other congresspersons who are LGBTG. They also made sure that Obama was re-elected and while I don't agree with everything he's done, I do think he's a far better president than Romney would have made.

Romney was one of the first people to outsource American jobs overseas. He was so out of touch with the electorate and was completely clueless about...well, real life and what it was like for the other 99% of the American people. This is the real problem with the economy, is that most American jobs have been outsourced, leaving no decent jobs for Americans here.

The Republicans love to attack the Democrats, but really they are responsible for the bad economy and they refuse to work with Obama and the other Democrats to get us back on track.

To sum up, I think if anyone is to be blamed for the mess America is in today, it should be our government representatives, those elected by the people to represent us, which they don't and haven't for a very long time. This isn't a generational problem, it's an age-old problem – those in charge are corrupt and want to acquire ever more money and power so they try to control Americans with all these crazy laws. I think we're at a real crossroads in history right now and all of us are needed to fight back against the power-mongering agenda of the powers that be.

Christopher: Can you tell us a bit about

Green Egg's history? My knowledge of it is in the second reincarnation as a professional looking magazine.

Ariel: *Green Egg* first opened its doors in March, 1968. It was founded by Oberon Zell-Ravenheart as the official journal of the **Church of All Worlds**, which Oberon also founded and became 501c3 in that same year of 1968. Church of All Worlds was the first Pagan church in America.

At first, it was only a one page ditto sheet that contained church news. Later, it grew to several more pages and began to publish articles of interest to Pagans, that included historical research about our religion and also thoughtful articles about how to change the prevalent paradigm, which was seen by many then as something that no longer served the vast majority of America. It was published for about 10 years and then closed its door due to financial difficulties.

By about 1980 or so, Diane Darling had joined Oberon and Morning Glory in a triad group marriage and in the mid-eighties, was interested in starting up *Green Egg* again. Someone loaned them money and *Green Egg* was once again being published.

Under her leadership, *Green Egg* really blossomed and that's when it became very well-known. It won several awards and published some ground-breaking articles by the likes of Isaac Bonewits, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Darryl Cherny, Phyllis Currott,

LaSara Firefox, Ed Fitch, Jesse Wolf Hardin, Anodea Judith, Ralph Metzner, Diana Paxson, Starhawk, and Robert Anton Wilson.

It also had the Legendary *Green Egg* Forum, which brought in letters from all kinds of Pagans across the country and was extremely instrumental in bringing Pagans together. It also had a classified ads section where people could meet other Pagans and/or polyamorous people. This was in the days before the internet and Pagans were still pretty much in the closet so it was difficult for many of us to find each other. Indeed, that was how I found Oberon, the Church of All Worlds, Pagan festivals and Paganism itself.

Christopher: How long have you been with *Green Egg*? Could tell us a bit about what was happening then and how we end up where *Green Egg* is now online?

Ariel: I started managing *Green Egg* in January of 2007 when my husband, Tom and I resurrected *Green Egg*. After almost 15 years of being published as a print magazine, *Green Egg* was closed down by the person who was then head of the Board of Directors. It was making good money then and was very popular. This person sold *Green Egg* to someone who agreed to pay off the debts of Church of All Worlds, which came to about \$25,000. This was in 2001.

This was all very illegal because in a 501c3, every single decision has to be voted on by the Board of Directors and

approved. But the BoD was never told of this back-room deal, even though a contract was signed. The copyright is held by the Church of All Worlds, not one person. There were a lot of problems at that time and many deals were made behind the backs of the BoD.

These events were hidden from most of the church's membership for a number of years, until 2007, when my husband and I decided to resurrect Green Egg. We were sitting in front of the fireplace one bitterly cold winter evening in late January. I remember saying to Tom "I wish Green Egg was still publishing, we'd at least have some intelligent reading to do during these bitterly cold winters." Tom agreed with me and suddenly a small voice inside me said "Why don't YOU restart Green Egg?" I'd never been a publisher or editor of any type before but I had spent my entire life reading and was always an excellent proofreader, as well as being really good in English. When I pitched the idea to Tom, he got excited about it, too.

We wrote up a proposal for Oberon and sent it off to him. He, of course, was delighted by the idea of having Green Egg started up again after being closed down for 7 years. Oberon really took a chance with us because we had no formal experience at running a magazine; but he always liked our writing and he believed in us, so he gave us the green light. We announced our decision to start up Green Egg again in a press release which we circulated all over the internet.

That was on a Tuesday in late January. Two days later, I received an e-mail from a man who claimed to hold the intellectual property rights to Green Egg. We were obviously not off to a good start! I stayed up all night long then, researching copyrights. I finally found the patent office online and learned that the Church of All Worlds holds the copyright for Green Egg and always has. So, officially at least, we were within our rights to publish.

I didn't hear back from him, but Oberon received an e-mail from him some months later, claiming that he held the copyright. By then, of course, we had found out about the back-room deal. Oberon explained to him that he, along with numerous others in the CAW had been hoodwinked and that it was a bogus deal, which wouldn't hold up in court. This poor guy had no idea he'd been hoodwinked, until that time. The matter was dropped and we've had no problems with copyright or intellectual property rights since.

There were several people who had leadership positions in the Church of All Worlds and did a lot of crooked deals, but they were eventually run off those who had the best interests of CAW at heart, instead of trying to make money from it. There was revenue from Green Egg that was stolen as well and Oberon never got paid as he should have when he retired from Green Egg. These people are no longer part of CAW, needless to say and Church of All Worlds is doing fine today.

When we first started, we decided to be strictly online because we had zero funds to publish it in print. The low overhead of publishing online was perfect for Green Egg so that's what we did. A lot of print magazines were having trouble selling subscriptions, so we figured the internet was probably going to be the new frontier for magazines. We must have been right, because now there are all kinds of Pagan publications, including blogs that are online. We charged \$13 initially for a year's subscription but there was still only Tom and I running it, with me doing all the clerical stuff. I had long-term illness at that time, with a lot of brain fog and it was hard to keep it all straight, so a few years ago, we decided to make it free. We've never regretted it and we never did it for the money anyway. It's something we really enjoy doing and it's our way of giving back to the Pagan community. At this point, Tom does all the graphics, layout and final editing, as well as writing science articles. Tom is a retired microbiologist/biology teacher and scientific researcher, so he has a great background in science and has always been interested in alternative science, which fits perfectly with Green Egg.

In August of 2011, my dear friend, Sylvie Selu, offered to help us out by setting up a wonderful website which she maintains. She's our Web Wizard and does a terrific job. She's been caring for her father for several years, who has been very sick, but she always gets the job done and gives of herself tirelessly. I love working with her, because she's brilliant, creative and

like Tom and myself, utterly devoted to Green Egg. She also does some editing, proofreading and posting on Green Egg's Facebook page. This is in addition to her running the Pentacle Project, a Pagan group dedicated to fighting bigotry against Pagans and to maintaining Pagan religious rights. She does all of this for free and I think she's an amazing person.

Christopher: How did Green Egg end up having an hour long blog radio show?

Ariel: In spring of 2011, Oberon was invited by Witch School to run a weekly hour-long show on Blog Talk Radio. He invited me to be his co-host, which I readily accepted. We did the show for about a year and a half, until Oberon realized that he just didn't have time to work on his books and other projects and still do the radio show, so that left just me.

My wonderful friend, Ruthann offered me a slot on her radio show on Blog Talk Radio, which I happily accepted. Sylvey volunteered to co-host with me and now we've been doing the show since the end of last November. We have a steadily growing audience and have had some terrific guests on our show. The name of the show is the Green Egg Radio Hour and you can find more information about it on our home page at:

greeneggzine.com

You can also find out about our weekly guests, which we always post on both of

our Facebook pages:

<https://www.facebook.com/greeneggzine>

<https://www.facebook.com/GreenEgg2>

We are on every Thursday, from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. PST/7 p.m. to 8 p.m. EST). You can check our postings, which are usually up by Wednesday and no later than Thursday a.m. to see who our guest is and for the URL to listen to the show. The show is up for a week after airing so you can listen to it at your own convenience.

Christopher: Are you looking for new writers and new columnists?

Ariel: ALWAYS!!!! We look for contributors who are creative and think outside of the box. If they have a great idea but don't feel confident about their writing skills, I always tell them not to worry about it, just do your best and I'll polish it up, that's what editors do. I'd rather have an article with a terrific, unusual viewpoint than a well-polished essay because I think it's the ideas that are most important to Green Egg.

If it's a controversial viewpoint, all the better, because it gets people thinking and also brings in new readers and new ideas. To me, that's what Green Egg is there for, to explore new worlds and go "where no man's gone before", as Oberon likes to say.

We also encourage people to e-mail us and let us know what you like, don't like, what you think should be changed or any ideas

that might be helpful. You can e-mail us at:

greeneggzine@gmail.com

Christopher: So what of the future for Green Egg? What does it need to be and what would you like to see it become?

Ariel: This is an excellent question and one that I'm constantly asking myself. After six years of running a magazine, it's not always easy to come up with fresh ideas and to reinvent yourself and the magazine. But we do try to keep the core ideas of Green Egg alive. We know that we always want it to be a platform for unusual, creative, alternative ideas and paradigms. Hopefully, you will find things in Green Egg that most people are either too afraid to publish because they fear ridicule, or they can't envision or they just don't have the type of creativity that allows outside-the-box thinking, unfortunately.

Green Egg has always belonged to the Pagan community and we're well aware that it probably wouldn't exist if there were no Pagans. As such, Green Egg is shaped by our Pagan community and that's something that I really enjoy about it. I never cease to be amazed by the incredible magick that is Green Egg. It has opened doors for me and for some who have written for it; it's still used as a source for universities, scholars and even TV. Several years ago, we received a request from CNN for a reprint of an article in Green Egg. You just never know where Green Egg will pop up. I've met some of the most extraordinary people

due to Green Egg.

What would I like it to be? I'd like to see it continue to be an inspiration for the Pagan community, as well as a reflection of our growth and our ideas. I'd also like to see it become even more of a resource for scholarly writing and ideas. Many universities now have a Pagan Studies department and I'd like to get it into college libraries so it's a resource that is easy to find and is a good reference for Pagan history, ideas, culture, mythology, etc. I'd love to see it become a serious reference source for scholars. I will be launching an outreach project to universities this year and I'll need lots of help if anyone wants to volunteer, please contact me at:

greeneggzine@gmail.com

This would be a great project for college students, who can promote Green Egg and talk to the librarians to make sure that there are copies of Green Egg in as many college libraries as possible.

Christopher: Where can people learn more about Green Egg?

Ariel: Well, people can go to our website at:

greeneggzine.com

Click on the "About Green Egg" button and you will see our history there, as well as the letter that the CAW Board of Directors put out about Green Egg (erroneously) having

"financial issues." That's what people were told, so that Green Egg could be sold off and money pocketed by the person who tried to shut it down. There's also our history up on the page as well. Of, course, if anyone has questions about Green Egg, please feel free to contact me at the above e-mail address.

Christopher: Is there anything us that you would like our readers to know?

Ariel: Yes. I would like our readers to know that it is an honor and a privilege to serve the Pagan community, one which we highly esteem and hold as a sacred charge. I love working on Green Egg and connecting with Pagans from all over the world.

I'd like to encourage people to send in your ideas, articles, artwork, graphics, experiences and suggestions to us. If Green Egg is to remain a living, vital, ever-evolving publication that truly reflects Pagan values and ideas, then we need to keep hearing from our readers and to have contributions, articles, artwork, etc. from our community. Thank you, Christopher, for giving me the opportunity to talk about Green Egg.

Russian Wiccan Alliance Interview With ParNada

By Christopher Blackwell

While I have interviewed Heathens and Pagans in Russia, I had not yet had a chance to find out about Wiccans. So when my friend Gwiddon suggested that I interview ParNada, I got in touch and she was kind enough to give me time for this interview.

Christopher: Could you give us just a bit of background about yourself?

ParNada: Hi! My mundane name is Polina. I am a young mother, and an activist in the Russian Wiccan Alliance (RWA).

Christopher: How and when did you find your way to become Wiccan? Do you follow any particular tradition?

ParNada: I became Wiccan when I was very little. I was ten years old, and in my opinion, this was fate. On one spring day I was traveling in the Moscow subway, and I came across a book by Silver Ravenwolf (it was "TeenWitch: Wicca for a New Generation", 2003). I should mention here that what one usually sees in small shops near the subway station is mostly pulp fiction. All kinds of cheap books and newspapers, something which usually provokes no thought at all. I think that the shop owners simply looked at the book cover and thought that it was a teenage mystery novel or a girl's romance novel.

My family was by no means wealthy, and

the fact that I had enough money that day to buy the book ... trust me, that was a real miracle! Taking all these factors into account, and the fact that I should not have been riding the subway to begin with, I think that the very fate itself brought me to this place, and gave me the opportunity to obtain this book, so I could learn about Wicca.

I was interested in magic even before that, but there were simply no books on magic in Russia, which portrayed it in a way, that appealed to me (mostly these were ceremonial grimoires or overly Christianized folk spells). This book opened my eyes on what Wicca is... and I immediately seized this opportunity to learn. The most appealing part of all this (then and now) was its closeness to Nature and its system of personal responsibility for my own life. And, certainly, just like most young girls (especially those from poor families) I really liked the idea of changing my own life for the better with magic.

Considering that I was interested in Wicca from such an early age, I can most certainly say that it plays a very important role in my life. In essence, it is responsible for shaping my personality, my aspiration to honesty and optimism even in the most dire times in life. It helped me survive through some very difficult times when I was a child, and helped me not to be frightened of hardships now that I am an adult.

The thing is, there were very few books on Wicca in those days. Even now, I'd

say, that we can't boast a great variety of good books on Wicca either, something which we all regret dearly, therefore quite naturally I cannot attribute my practices to any particular tradition. For all intents and purposes I am an eclectic. Although, quite recently I became attracted to the Feri tradition (what I learned about this tradition made a great fit with how I felt about the world). So, I am actively trying to translate articles on that topic... and who knows, where that would lead me.

Christopher: Are there any difficulties for Wiccans in Russia? what about being recognized as a religion?

ParNada: For me, personally, I can hardly say anything about difficulties for wiccans in Russia, simply because I did not have any real difficulties whatsoever. I was fortunate to be working in an environment, where my employer and my co-workers would listen to my stories about our holidays, our tenets of faith, about such exotic things for the office cubicle as auras or astral travel. They were very positive about that!

I know that there are Wiccans who really had to deal with serious problems. Most of these problems are of a personal nature (within family or among friends), but I have never come across problems with either the employers or the authorities. For the most part, we are a very quiet bunch (until quite recently there was almost no activity at all). There aren't that many of us, and we don't attract as much attention to really

make things difficult for us.

At present Wicca is not recognized as a religion in Russia. The reason being, that criteria for recognizing a religion are a little bit different here. At this time only one Wiccan group have filed official registration papers for recognition as a local religious group under Federal Law, this is a coven in Izhevsk (a medium-sized city 1,100 km east of Moscow). According to Russian Law a religious group needs to file annual statements with the local authorities for 15 years before it gets the right to form a religious organization, such as a church under Federal Law. This right is by no means a sure deal, because the local authorities have to approve the right to register, etc.

However, even with the formation of an officially recognized religious organization is not a guarantee of the acceptance of the religion, because acceptance really comes if a large percentage of the country's population belongs to that particular religion. We are also planning to file for registration of our local Moscow group, and are getting ready for it as we speak.

Christopher: What is the Russian Wiccan Alliance? When did it get started and what are its goals?

ParNada: The Russian Wiccan Alliance is, in essence, a group of activists, who are trying to develop Wiccan life in Russia. Before RWA most Wiccans in Russia were solitary practitioners. There were covens in several cities, that I know of (I know three

such covens). However, these covens are closed groups (which means that they only work on their own development).

There were several attempts to meet each other and get together. At some point there was even a try at an all-Russian Wiccan festival, somewhere at an outdoors site, however, this attempt ended in failure. In my opinion, the reason for that was, that people did not really know each other well, and they wanted to try to organize such a large and complex event, without assigning roles, without any preparation and being comfortable with each other.

The main goal of RWA is facilitating meaningful dialogue between wiccans in various Russian cities. That was the reason why we wanted to give a festival idea another try and organized a Wiccan summer camp over the weekend near Moscow. We are also trying to further develop Wicca in Russia by various means, including group translations of important articles on Wicca, holding lectures, inviting foreign speakers whenever possible.

Besides these overall global goals, we are also involved in smaller local projects. For example, we are producing a Russian-language PDF Wiccan magazine "MoonTime" (Vremya Luni), we recently released the very first Wiccan calendar, we hold dances, write songs. We try to do everything that is of interest to us, and what makes our life better and more colorful.

We also consider important organizing vari-

ous eco projects and humanitarian projects in our country. We advocate responsible attitude to ecology, separation of garbage, group territory clean up among Wiccans. We organize volunteer "clean up Saturdays" and help others do the same, collect toys and clothes for orphanages and animal shelters. We plan to do much more stuff in that regard.

I should mention that RWA was never intended to be the organization that proselytizes or advocates Wicca, seeks new recruits, etc. We work only with those who are already interested in Wicca or consider Wicca their spiritual path.

Christopher: What are some of the things members can take part in?

ParNada: You don't have to pay money or sign contracts to become a member of RWA. The only criteria for membership is activism. We can't really even say with certainty how many of us are there, because people contribute differently to the development of our union and the development of Wicca in Russia, and even the smallest contribution counts. Basically, those who do something, help with something, organize something – these are members of RWA. Those who simply attend our lectures, visit our festivals or follow what we do – these are, what we call, friends of RWA. Any Wiccan can take part in our activities, more so, anyone can participate in organizing them (and coincidentally, thus become a member of RWA).

For example, everyone can suggest their own ritual for the summer camp, or offer amendments to the proposed ritual. Once the ritual text is ready, we put it up for public discussion out in the open and allow some time to pass for people to have an opportunity to propose amendments, or, perhaps, take a speaking part in the ritual, offer to bring their own tools, etc.

We also aim to develop relationships between Wiccan hand-makers and their potential buyers, because it turns out that there are quite a few artists among us, who make stuff by hand, but nobody is buying their products, because potential clients don't know that what these artisans do, they know nothing about them. At several of our events we hosted a hand-made goods market, and artists took part in the market without any fees payable to RWA.

Christopher: Have you been able to get in contact with Wiccans outside Russia?

ParNada: Yes, last summer we were very lucky, that through PFI we got in touch with Enenna, an Alexandrian Wiccan priestess from Poland. She gave us a great lecture, and she enjoyed her stay in Russia so much, that she wants to return to Russia again this Spring (although, this time it is mostly a friendly visit for recreation and meeting with friends).

We want to continue working in that direction, because, in essence, all of us here in Russia come from a similar background. As

I mentioned before, there aren't that many books on Wicca in Russia, and very few other sources of information, therefore, we all read the same books, all know the same stuff. Everyone brings their own elements into practice, or elements of other traditions and religions. I did notice, that Russian Wiccans express a great interest in listening to their foreign colleagues, rather than to someone from Russia.

Christopher: I note that Google Translate does a reasonable job with translating Russian, at least into English. Would you like more contact with outside Wiccan organizations?

ParNada: To be honest, we don't have any contacts with other Wiccan organizations, although we are thinking about it. We are in touch with PFI (with help from Russian-speaking members of PFI), as well as authors of several articles, which we want to translate (for example, SilverStorm gave us the permission to translate several articles into Russian, and use original illustrations and photos). We are very happy when foreigners allow us to use their material, so that we can write better articles and open new horizons for Wiccans in Russia.

But we plan on moving even further, and our biggest dream (the one that we are actively working on) is the invitation of Wiccans from other countries to our events, as well as simply for socializing and recreation in Russia. We consider this face-to-face dialogue very important, because every time it provides us with food for thought, new

ideas, maybe ways to avoid some mistakes that Wiccans in other countries made.

Christopher: How can people get in contact and learn more about the Russian Wiccan alliance?

ParaNada: We have our internet site souz-wiccan.ru, as well as my primary e-mail address parnada@souzwiccan.ru. We are also on Facebook (this is a Russian-language page), in LJ, twitter, vkontakte, as well as blogs. Our main tool is the main website and the group VKontakte (this is the largest and most popular social net in Russia, mostly similar to Facebook).

Christopher: Don't you make some things for the Wiccan customers? How did you get into making such things? Could you tell us some of the things that you make?

ParaNada: I really love doing stuff with my hands. Considering that Wicca is a very large part of my being, most of my hand-made products are related to Wicca in one way or another. Initially, I was mainly involved in the creation of pentacles and books of shadows (problems with most commercially available tools is that they are imported, so the import duties and the store mark up make them very expensive to buy). I was always interested in going beyond that and making something new, because I find it a lot more satisfying than stamping out same stuff. Recently I added pyrography (wood burning) and Wiccan jewelry making.

I also enjoy giving old and unusable things new life, using them in a new capacity. For example, I have many paper boxes in my house decorated with decoupage art, where I put all my stuff, starting from pasta and all the way down to Christmas tree toys. Many of my friends know that I can give new life to old stuff, so they set aside their old things for me to work on, it could be an old wooden box from a tea set or an old paper folder. I think that this approach is good both from the creativity and the ecology viewpoint.

Christopher: How and where do you sell your products?

ParaNada: I mainly sell products to my friends and acquaintances, someone who already knows me. However, I also have my little on-line shop in-dee.ru (something akin to etsy.com), as well as a vkontakte group.

Christopher: How can people find out more about what you have available and do you ever make special orders?

ParaNada: I am very impatient and proud of my hand-making, and so whenever I make something new I immediately take a picture of it and post it in vkontakte and LJ. If that item was made for sale, then I put it up in my store as well. Most of my products are sold after making, but I sometimes take orders as well. The most important success factor here is whether my client and I have similar ideas as to what they want.

My main problem with working on customer's orders is inspiration, I need to be inspired by this order. The thing is I don't like making things just because it has to be done. I want my works to be filled with the spirit of adventure, the joy of creation. Even though I enjoy being creative very much, and I love making things, there are times, when my work just does not happen. In moments like these I prefer not to force myself, and leave it be for a while, rather than leave any negative impressions on the item itself or in my soul.

Christopher: Is there anything else that you would like our readers to know?

ParNada: I would like to point out that Wicca in Russia is mostly the work of self-trained practitioners. I think that it was the Americans came up with the term "hedgewitch", looks like this term suits Russian Wiccans very much. The number of initiated witches in Russia can be counted on just one hand, we are talking single digits. There are no teachers, who are ready to train people (other than those self-trained individuals, eclectics, who follow no particular tradition). However, I do know many Russian Wiccans who are thirsty for knowledge, ready for training. In addition to that, they are desperately longing for regular dialogue with our foreign friends. We are always happy to welcome new friends!

Christopher: Again I would like our readers to know than there are a variety of good translation programs on line.

Additional point from ParNada personally:

I would also like to touch upon the difficult relationships Wiccans have with the practitioners of other Pagan and witchcraft traditions.

Russian Wiccans have historically made various contacts with other Pagan traditions, and our interactions with them were rather uneven. There are several Slavic Pagans, Asatruar and other older pagan group members, who view Wicca as a genuine spiritual path, many others are still acting uppity towards us.

Perhaps, it has something to do with the fact that most Russian Wiccans are young folks, under 25 years old, and many are basing their practices on really sloppy and low-quality translated material. There are times when negative feelings are explained by the attitude, that if you were born in Russia, then you have to be a Slavic Pagan (rodnover).

I think that a lot of it is attributable to the lack of dialogue between our traditions, by the lack of mutual respect, when people fight it out on the internet forums, trying to uphold their point of view. Over time, I believe that this animosity is lifting somewhat.

Gwiddon brought a good tradition of pubmoots to Russia, which took root at this point in Moscow, where Pagans from many traditions meet and chat. I personally hope that it will provide the conditions for mutual respect between practitioners of different

paths, so that in the future we may organize much larger events, attended by various Pagans.

Book Review

Embracing Heathenry

by Larisa Hunter

ISBN 978-1-905713-81-3

This is the second book I have reviewed a book by Larisa, the first one under her then pen name Mist. As she has become more public she felt it was time to go by her real name.

In *Embracing Heathenry* she try to cover a lot of ground, to give an an idea of what actually living as a Heathen is like. She points out that Heathenry is an umbrella term for people that follow the Northern gods, be that Norse, German, even Anglo Saxon Gods of England.

Heathenry is often called the religion with homework and certainly there is a great amount of material to study and many different skills one might want to learn in the way of understanding the old traditions. Many Heathens pick up some of the old skills like spinning and weaving, black smithing, even various old forms of fighting, as a way to honor the old Heathen cultures while also adapting to what is necessary and useful to modern times.

There are not only the gods and goddesses to honor, but also various spirits of the land and ancestors. So she brings up the importance of personal and spiritual expe-

rience along with the obvious scholarship from the Sagas.

She also points out that there are differences of opinion among the very independent Heathens, so that not only must one seek out a group community that one is comfortable with, but also a group that will be comfortable with you. For community is one of the most important parts of being Heathen and the bonds that form within such a community. One can be solitary and Heathen and many are, but the building of community is both helpful to individual practice and helps to build a group of people that can give support as needed to each other and some feeling of safety in a risky world that we live in.

Then to show how all of this might be woven into one's life, Larisa shows how she brings her devotion into daily life, perhaps focusing and a single god or goddess each day and considering how her day to day work might be used to honor them, or help her learn daily lessons as needed. She may also honor the local nature spirits or her ancestors as well.

If you are considering the Heathen path, or actually beginning it, this might help you and give you some ideas for yourself. It is also a useful book to anyone that is curious about Heathens and it clears up some misconceptions that people may have about Heathens.

ACTION

Christopher Blackwell: Editor

Bill Kilborn: Web Guy