



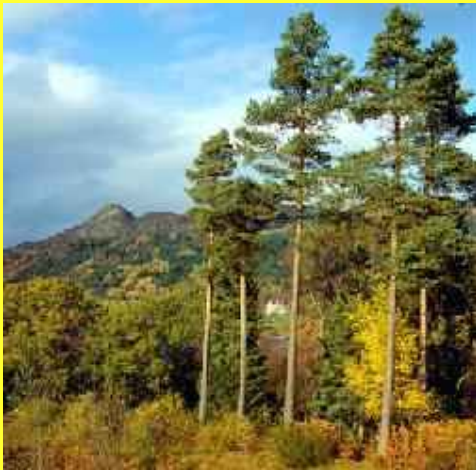
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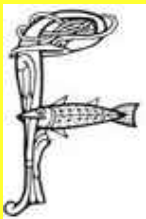
Fall Equinox, Year 45 (Sept 23rd, 2007)

Volume 23, Number 6



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Fall Equinox, a minor High Day in the Druid calendar. We have found no evidence that the ancient Druids celebrated the Fall Equinox as they did the four major festivals of Oimelc, Beltaine, Lughnasadh, and Samhain. Those festivals were originally pastoral/agricultural in nature: Oimelc for the Ewes coming into milk and the birthing of the lambs, Beltaine as a time when the cattle were taken into higher pastures for summer grazing, and Samhain the end of the harvest. There is some speculation that the Druids may have used the Equinoxes and Solstices to

do astronomical calculations and possibly to determine when the major High Day festivals and assemblies would take place. We have from the classical writers that the Druids practiced astronomy. Caesar wrote in his Gallic War that, "They have also much knowledge of the stars and their motion, of the size of the world and of the earth, of natural philosophy."

The Druids were known for using divination to predict the future and to tell the will of the gods (see also the Live Oak and Poison Oak Groves' version of RDNA Order of Common Worship for a modern use of the practice). This was done according to Miranda Green* by the observation of natural phenomena by the examination of the behavior of birds and animals. This is a practice that can be learned by the modern Druid as well and can be used in a simple, practical way of determining the weather for the coming season.

I have spoken in previous Missal-Anies in Poison Oak Grove news of my experiment of predicting the dryness or wetness of the coming year by the amount of acorns in the Fall. One Fall, when we were still at the old grove site in Orinda, there were hardly any acorns to be found. I counted possibly three at most that had fallen, and this was over a wide area of several acres. It turns out the following winter and year there was a drought. It was as if the oak trees "knew" there would be no water that would help germinate the acorns so the trees produced fewer. Not producing acorns also allowed them to save what precious water they had stored in their trunks for their own survival rather than wasting it on acorns that would not be able to thrive



So what does the Fall mean for trees, and how can we as Druids use the observation of trees to tell the portent of the coming season? Trees, namely deciduous ones, shed their leaves in response to the season: vis a vis the Fall when the days decrease in length, temperatures cool, and there is less moisture in the soil. Falling autumn temperatures cause a decrease in the levels of chlorophyll in the leaves of deciduous trees. (The trees stop producing chlorophyll to preserve their energy over the Winter.) The leaves appear to be green because their chloroplasts, chlorophyll a and chlorophyll b, which absorb blue-violet and red-orange wavelengths of light. As a leaf starts to die the chlorophyll is broken down and taken back into the tree. This causes the colors of the carotenoids or the yellow-orange pigments that we see in Fall leaves. The yellow pigments are normally found in leaves but are masked by the chlorophyll. Thus when the chlorophyll breaks down the yellow shows through. The red colors are produced by the dying leaf tissue from sugars that remain in the leaf. This however still requires warm sunny days for the remaining chlorophyll to work, and cold nights to slow the transport of sugar out of the leaf. This is exactly what happens in the approaching Fall season. The varying shades of red, orange, and even purple are caused by the mixing different proportions of the yellow pigments with the red.

You can develop and practice your nature divination skills by learning how to predict the wet or dryness of coming year by noting such things as when the leaves start to turn and fall. When do the acorns start to fall? Is there a lot of a few? Does this coincide with the shortening of the days and how long after the Summer Solstice? Or does it coincide with the warmth of the days? Or both? Keep notes and compare year after year and you'll begin to see a pattern emerge. For example, less acorns means drier winter; an abundance of acorns a very wet one. (This too was something I observed. The winter following a plentiful acorn crop was almost nonstop rain for over a month, including a deluge that New Year's Eve night which caused flooding in Canyon.). Will it be a dark damp winter or a dry one? Watch to see what happens!

*Green, The World of the Druids, Thames and Hudson, 1997.



News of the Groves



For the [Full Grove Directory](#)



Mango Mission: News from Southeast Asia

A.K.A. The Digitalis Grove in Exile

All is well here in the Tropic of Cancer. Baby is doing well, remarkably well behaved, I'll have to give him a generous allowance in gratitude when he grows up. The monks here are in cloister during the rainy season, ostensibly to keep them from falling into the ricefields when traversing the farms that are being planted, and are quite slippery. But really its about taking a break from the everyday reality and doing some intensive training for three months. I've written an article about the topic in this issue. Only about six weeks left to the end of the Summer Half of the Year, but alas, I live in the tropics, so I cannot really look forward to cooler weather, much less the stark beauty of winter.



Awen Grove: News from Canada

We've been busy the past few months. We visited with the ADF Grove of the Ancient Ways back at Midsummer and had a small, stiflingly hot but wonderful Lughnassadh get together at our place.

Summer has been unusually hot this year, but we did get a maple tree planted in the back yard.

We are gearing up for Autumn Equinox and may be trying our hands...or should I say feet...at a fire-walk in Red Deer!

Blessings,

Athelia Nihtscada /\



Ancient Circles Hearth: News from New York

Warm Greetings Stacey,

Ancient Circles is pleased to begin adding our events to "A Druid Missal-Any."

First....our name has changed to Ancient Circles Hearth to better reflect the uniquely varied interests and traditions of our membership.

Here's what's happening at Ancient Circles for the Autumn Equinox 2007

Ancient Circles is pleased to announce the resurrection of its newsletter, "Ancient Circles." The newsletter

features original writing by its members and contributing writers from the larger pagan community, family activities, recipes, book and music reviews etc. The newsletter is offered free of charge.

We are also pleased to be at Adirondack Pagan Pride Day as guest speakers about Druidry.

We are meeting bi-weekly for our socials and have begun our teaching series "Sacred Living." Members will also be teaching workshops in their areas of expertise/interest. We will be hosting a Mabon Camping Trip and Ritual at Moreau Lake State Park on September 21 and 22nd. There are still openings for campers...please contact us for more information. inion_an_daghdha@yahoo.com or daffyd_daoud@yahoo.com

We're looking forward to a very busy Yuletide season!



The Grove of Branwyn: News from Georgia

Hello

I just wanted to let you know about a new proto-grove which has been started in SW Georgia. The group is called the Grove of Branwyn and is based out of Moultrie, Georgia. We already have five people as members. We hope to have our first meeting on the next full moon, and draft a constitution. Love the newsletter, and we will keep you up to date as to our goings-on.

Well we've had our first meeting and it went very well. Our proto grove has nine registered members, of which 6 are active. All of us went to the first meeting, Held at a local Western Sizzler here in Moultrie. We plan on having our first big get together on the weekend nearest the fall equinox, a nice family pot-luck supper and outside liturgy. We are working on a constitution right now (nothing fancy), and will relate all what comes out of that to you.

Thank you for all your help and support.

Love in Branwen and Rhiannon,

Sean and Ms. Connie



Moose Breechcloth Proto-Grove: News From Minnesota

Seasonal Salutations Siblings!

Ok, a quick back-up here...last installment I told you about the Dragon Boat race I had been tapped to coach. We didn't do great, but we didn't do half-bad, either. For our first year racing, and considering 3/4 of the team had no experience in a canoe...much less a dragon boat...we pulled off twelfth place out of 25 teams. Rock solid dead center. Not too shabby for a bunch of greenies.

Other news; yes, I wound up knowing someone who died in the Minneapolis bridge collapse. I didn't know Vera Peck well, but I knew who she was from work. She was with her son when the bridge collapsed. After folks (on the RDNAwebchat) went out to verify Ross and my status, I found out about two days after that Vera was one of the people listed as missing. I actually drove past the bridge for the first time on Sunday (Aug 26). All the pictures you've seen on the news can't compare to seeing it in person. I've driven that

bridge many many times. It just isn't there anymore. Seeing it in person, it took a while to even register what I was seeing. The huge yawning chasm of debris and the devastation it left just doesn't translate in TV land. I was left speechless and stunned for several hours after.

In warm and fuzzy good karma news, I rescued a sparrow. I was coming into work, and the poor little guy was flopping around in the middle of the parking lot. I thought, initially, that he had a broken wing. I stopped traffic going through the middle of the parking lot (receiving a few middle fingers in the process), while I picked him up and moved him to a grassy area until I could get a box. I found a box, lined it with paper towels, and went back outside and put the little guy in the box. I stuck him in my car (windows rolled down) until I could find an organization to take him. I eventually found the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Roseville, MN (a couple miles north of me), and they said they'd take him. However, I had just gotten to work, so I couldn't take him until the following day, when they'd be open again. So, every hour, I was out in my car checking on the little guy. I soaked some bread in water, and I got him to eat by hand feeding him. Once he figured out that the huge hand in his box wasn't going to hurt him, he ate a lot. I have no idea how long he was out there...but he was really hungry. The bread was really more of a vehicle for the water. I couldn't get him to drink any other way. But the bread soaked up a bunch of water, so he wouldn't get dehydrated.

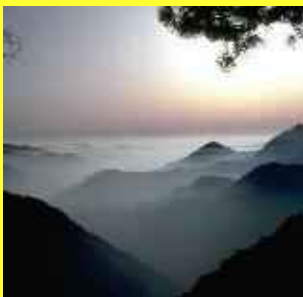
The Ojibwe believe (as do many other cultures) that our language is a divine language that animals can understand. So I spoke to him in Ojibwe, and his convulsions calmed down (convulsions, I assume, from shock). And yeah...you know it...I wound up even naming him. I don't know if the little guy imprinted on me, but I certainly imprinted on him. I named him Agaawaatese. It means "he casts a shadow flying." A big name to live up to...the power of positive thinking, I guess.

Long story short...he's now at the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. And yes, I'm calling every other day to check on his status. No broken wing; that was the good news. But he has some pretty heavy head trauma. My guess is he flew into/was hit by a car. He's still having some issues with the head trauma, and it's still too soon to tell how well he'll recover. But they were happy to report that he is eating like a real champ. And they said as long as he keeps fighting, they'll keep on fighting for him.

And yes, I'll give all of you an update on Agaawaatese in the next installment.

Until next time, folks...
gigawabamin nagutch,
and yours in the Mother,

Julie Ann and Lou



Grove of the Order of the Mists-Protogrove: News from Arizona

Greetings to all from Northern Arizona!

Monsoonal rains and cooler evenings have brought late summer plants galore around here. Sunflowers have burst forth along the roadsides cloaking our Earth Mother in a wondrous spectacle. Yet, the scantest evidence of the approaching fall is visible, leaves on the American Elms around town are beginning to pale and the grasslands of the cattle ranges are starting to turn to seed. My wife and I are already planning a trip (or several) over to the Sedona area to enjoy the vibrant fall colors that break out there with the variety of trees, turning the landscape into a riot of reds, oranges, and yellows framed by the red rocks and turquoise sky.

As well, soon it will be time to harvest the last of our garden. It's been a pleasant (yet frustrating at times) experience to find out what will grow well in this micro-climate of Winslow's high desert. Corn does well (of course that was a given with the Navajo and Apache having it as a staple around here), the Zucchini loved it. Bell pepper was kinda "iffy" but did produce some small but nice and sweet peppers. Tomatoes are a flat-out challenge with this soil. It wasn't anywhere near what would even sustain us, but the working knowledge it gave us for next season was invaluable. I've been told that potatoes will do great using a "stacked box" method...we may just try that next time around.

Not much else happening in Northern Arizona, just living life and enjoying time spent in the beautiful areas of the Earth Mother around us. I hope the changing of the seasons finds all our siblings within the Mother well. May your harvests be bountiful, both in the physical and spiritual gardens.

Tully & Anna
Grove of the Order of the Mists-Protogrove
Northern Arizona



Canine Grove: News from Oregon

We will be enjoying the last of the clear skies and warm days by riding to the mountains, and to the sea. Inviting the magic of the season to surprise us as it may. Also we will enjoy the many harvest festivals in the area; as well as, stocking up on the harvest bounty to sustain us during the cold dreary rainy months that lay ahead in western Oregon and

Washington.

Bindi



Clan of the Triplehorses: News from Oregon

Clan of the Triplehorses has been having a blast this summer!

We co-sponsored the West Coast Gathering of the Reformed Druids and Friends in Humboldt Redwoods State Park, California and six people attended from southern Oregon. On Saturday, we gave a presentation on Aromatherapy and there was another on Labyrinths. There was also a Reiki healing circle and a main ritual which included the taking of the Waters of Life. After the potluck, there was a Celtic music concert. We felt that was the best part- the live music, deep into the night and deep into the forest, with only the light of the bonfire.....it was just magical!

Also this summer, we held a lovely Croning ritual at a local labyrinth for one of our most valued member plus we have been giving some horse-back riding lessons at a nearby stable for interested grovies.

Our next public ritual will be 2007 Eight Winds Mountain Earth Gathering at Diamond Lake Resort, with several workshops and a Fall Equinox ritual honoring the Welsh pantheon.

See: <http://home.earthlink.net/~triplehorses/id7.html>

As always, feel free to email us at triplehorses@gmail.com

Or see our website at <http://www.adf.org/groups/groves/triple-horses>



Sunset Proto-Grove: News from California

And a partridge in a pear tree?

I don't know about partridges... but there are definitely birds in our pear tree! I felt like a pioneer woman this month, finding 101 uses for the 150 pears I picked off of the pear tree. (I spent two weekends cooking and baking pear crisp, pear and pecan bread, pear butter etc.)

The rest I left for the birds, they seem to enjoy waking me up as they twitter to each other each morning over their pear breakfast. So nice a sound to wake up to...I'll miss them after the pears are all gone.

Getting one of the kids off to college (I can't believe it, I have a kid who is in college! albeit early.) and the other one outfitted in school uniforms this week.

Soon the Indian summer that I think began yesterday with 104 degree heat and is forecasted to persist through the weekend, will soften into crisp winds and crunch leaves.

This weekend I think the females of the family will make our way across the bay and bond at an art festival by the ocean.

It may seem like I'm ahead of myself, but you'd be surprised how quickly Samhain will be here!: This year our little family protogrove will celebrate Samhain early with a visit to the haunted mansion at Disneyland in mid-October...complete with Jack Skellington.

Blessings to each of you-

Skye



Duir De Danu Grove: News from California

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

A Druid directory, The Druid Network (<http://druidnetwork.org/>), is going to list us in it. I mean the entire order of the New Reformed Druids of North America (and Europe, including Great Britain) is going to be in this directory. The compiler of this directory is a Brit. Seems like it's coming back home to where the Druids were born. Not our modern neo-Druids, but the old time Druids.

Tegwedd ShadowDancer



Poison Oak Grove: News from California

Publisher of "A Druid Missal-Any"

Acorns keep falling on my grove hmmm could be the beginning of a filk for the next RDNA Bardic contest. The acorns have been falling since August, earlier in the year than I remember. Someone told me it meant that Fall was going to come early this year. There was no real summer to speak of, just a few hot days, but no long stretches of t-shirt-short-s-play-outside weather. We'll see where the weather goes

the last four months of the year. There is still a chance in October for a last heat wave and Indian Summer.

The grove has been busy with extracurricular activities in addition to regular and High Day services. We've been to the Dunsmuir Scottish games in Oakland, seen Alasdair Frasier and guests play at the Freight and Salvage in Berkeley before the start of his late-summer fiddle camp, and caught him again post camp at the Pleasanton Scottish games (it's been a gamey summer!)



Mission-ary Impossible File 5: Vocation and Vacation

By Mike the Fool

During the Equinox, this middle-aged Druid's thoughts turn to balance.

Day and night are now equal, in balance, blah, blah, blah. You've heard this a hundred times, right? The following are some thoughts of my own.

When we are talking about even balance at this time, we are not usually saying that this is the ultimately preferable portion in our lives. Opposites are important for each other, for example, where there is life, death also must visit. You can't have one without the other. In eastern countries, the concept of the Yin Yang is known, and I think perfectly equal and interspersed opposites is a valuable lesson, but finding a halfway equidistant point on the polarity scale is not usually a tenable position to choose. More than a few Druids I know are fence-straddlers on many issues, able to argue the merits and demerits to both sides of an argument, but most of them have two buttocks on one side of the proverbial fence. One would expect no less from a tradition that springs from Carleton's liberal arts tradition. In other words, there is usually a general leaning towards one end of the spectrum, but without falling all the way to either side. In Buddhism, the "middle path" eschews extremes and encourages moderation, but it doesn't say where that magic point is, and I can't tell you either.

Some larger religions (not so with many forms of Buddhism) delight in polarity, but strive for an absolute position at one side (or the other), claiming each to be irrevocably enemies of the "other". This can sometimes be masochistically impossible. I feel it is theologically a rather simple formula and easy to understand and teach, but it is difficult in practice. Such religions often look askance on compromise or muddling in the middle. I suppose a clear imperative to reach a Sisyphean goal is comforting to those who can't or don't wish to debate things themselves. This essay concerns the opposites of the slacker vs. the overachiever, two of the current ideals in the American environment.



I don't mind saying that I dislike perfectionism, especially on a routine basis. I believe there are many degrees of effort that can be appropriate in difficult circumstances and various projects in our lives. At these varied points we are not at a "balance" so much as we are in an "equilibrium" or that magic biological word, "homeostasis". We can hold at that point, get by, and not waste effort, perhaps better spread around somewhere else. This might seem obvious, but it can also be easily forgotten, during a crisis or a fevered project.

Our grandchild, Ar nDraiocht Fein (www.adf.org) has a motto, "Why not excellence?" This is fine for me, with the caveat that one cannot be a true master of everything. So often we Druids have this overwhelming image of the ancient Druids as the paragons of all and every intellectual and academic field. I suspect even in their day, they were simply "good enough" in several areas and had their passion and excellence in a few

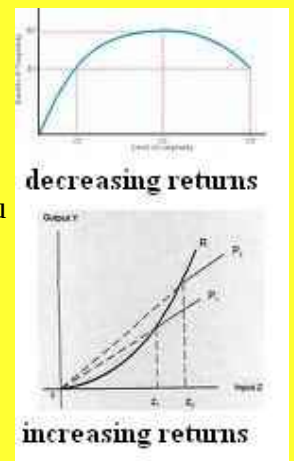


distinct sub-fields. One god I used to admire was Lugh, recently celebrated last season, the jack-of-all-trades, who once asked to be let into the house where the gods were partying, and was asked by the gate keeper what he was good at. Every trade he mentioned was already accounted for by a previous party participant, so Lugh asked if there was one who had the skill of doing all, there was not and he was admitted. That is all very well for a story, and there is a place for the competent generalist, but like the all-powerful hero Superman, such a model is not so appreciable by the average person on

deeper reading. In the world of superheroes, it is the flawed hero, the wounded Fisher King, who captivates the audience, the Spidermans and Batmans. Role-models teach us not only by their strengths, but their ability to err, their ability to deal with those frailties, and so weaknesses also are perhaps even more instructive to us.

The name Druidism itself may mistakenly lead the RDNA to believe we all aspire to become priests; a possibly less-than-ideal choice of names in retrospect. We should attain only what we can, and often we can not maintain full a reasonable activity of priesthood always, even if we do reach that. I know that I've led few services in the last year, and had to change my "mission statement" recently. You should attain what can be done reasonably, no less, no more. If that means undergoing orders, weekly services, and award-winning achievements, that is fine. If that means reading a book once in a while, attend a service every year or two, appreciating a glance at the sky out the window when time permits, that is fine too. Do what you can with what you got. You can always improve a little in any field, but the question is "Is it a good time to try to improve, and how far?" And remember the forest when you see the trees.

One of the few concepts I remember from several economics courses is the graph of diminishing returns. If you think of the chart with effort on the horizontal axis and results on the vertical axis, some fields in our lives have very distinct limits. I will never be a great portrait artist or world class 100 meter sprinter, although I could try very hard. In such fields, greater and greater efforts will be rewarded with smaller and smaller gains, past a certain point. However, we all know that in some fields where you possess unusual talent or opportunity, greater efforts will produce dizzyingly high returns. One of the tricks in life is to know how to get decent returns in the former instances, and shoot through the roof with the latter instances.



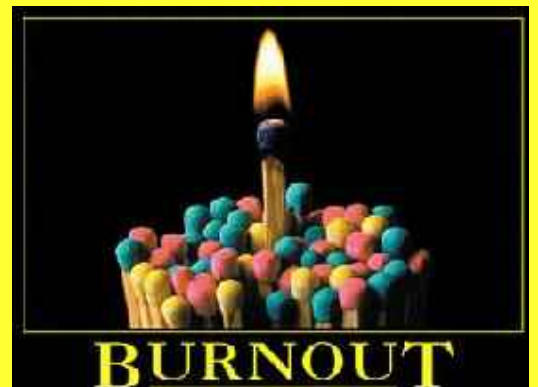
Some folks are consistent to an alarming degree. Dependability and reliability can be wonderful things. What I am talking about is an ascetic continuity of discipline until it reaches the point of self-defeating obsession. Take Cal Ripken's 2631 continuous baseball games; pretty impressive, but it came with a high price. Think of all the injuries made permanent through lack of rest, decreased performance, delayed healing, shortened careers and missed social events of his family from all those years. My wife recently had a streak of taking daily photos of our dog for four years, then her camera broke and she missed one day, and she was distraught. Taking pictures is a good thing, but missing a day does not negate the past accumulated benefits of each individual day of that previous streak. Some people need fixed schedules to remind and cajole themselves into a heightened level of activity; others prefer/can do so at their own pace. A few holes in a perfect record are still admirable and forgivable. Who are you trying to impress after all? The neighbors, your friends, the gods, and/or yourself? Perfect records are easy to tout, but a truly valuable performance should stand on its own feet, with a few blemishes. And there are more than a few fools whose last refuge is consistency once they go on the wrong track.

There is a story in Buddhism of an enlightened Bodhisattva being met on the road by an eager student. The Bodhisattva was carrying a heavy load of wood. He was asked, "What is the true secret of Buddhism?" The Bodhisattva promptly dropped his wood and smiled. Asked if this was the entirety of his teaching, the Bodhisattva smiled and picked up his wood and continued trudging along. Before enlightenment, chop wood and haul water, after enlightenment, chop wood and haul water. What has changed? Everything in your attitude and understanding, but life continues onward, and now you have the responsibility to pass that learning on to others.



I have in the past listed many admirable traits and unofficial minimal manners for Druids, but I want to encourage you to place some sensible maximum limits on your expectations and duties. It is rare that someone in your grove will ever tell you, "You are doing too many wonderful things?" Well, unless you are totally suffocating the other members's participation with your greatness. You do not have to impress anyone or be a Super-Druid, who is all things to all folks. You ultimately set your own bar, and you'll never make everyone satisfied, but you must start with yourself. Rome wasn't built in one day, and several smaller towns are quite nice to live in too. A vocation is sometimes recognized by contentment with the drudgery of an often thankless job. My mentor, Richard Shelton, has said that the key to being a priest is about service, not slavery. The Arch Druid also has a right not to be over-utilized by the rest of the Grove. There's a theory at Carleton, that the one who runs away from responsibility the slowest becomes Arch Druid. I would add a corollary that sometimes the Arch Druid must run away a little faster for his or her own health.

Over the years, I have seen a number of Groves and Covens falter (which is sometimes a good thing in a group that reveres cycles) not due to persecution, nor from lazy or inept leaders, but due to "burn-out" among the leadership. Druids who plan Proto-Groves often go on to become Priests and Arch Druids. They are dedicated folk with a mission of some kind. Some of these Druids, and I've been one of them, want to try out every idea, hold frequent services, provide oodles of assistance, to dozens of folks, have a dozen Druidic projects, all at the same time, and still expect to remain sane for years on end. Well, we know that can't go on forever.



As far as I know, there are no professional RDNA Priests who are fully financially supported by their Groves. We have jobs, we have classes, we have families, there are friendships, we have civic obligations, and we have a private personal life. Neglecting or ignoring these responsibilities to help your grovemates is neither admirable nor honorable in my book if it becomes habit. What kind of example is it to others to be obsessive rather than sensibly dedicated? Living a reasonable life might be a healthier lesson to them.



What is worrisome is that when you are over-burdened and not in moderated balance, you are more likely to make mistakes, hasty decisions or snap at someone when a little thing goes wrong. If not for your own sake, then for the grovelings' sakes, allot your resources and responsibilities wisely. All too often, when a Super-Druid burns-out, after having done nearly ALL the work, there are rarely any competent back-up folk trained to step in and take up the slack.

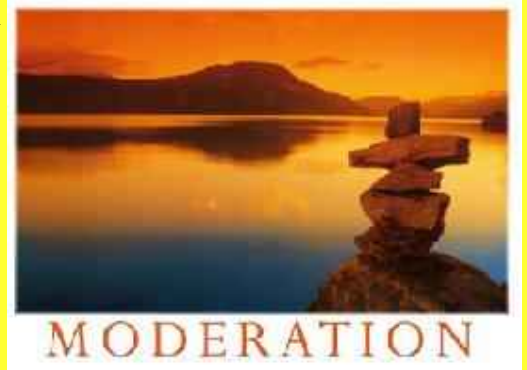
In other words, there are periods in everyone's Druidism when even the most devout Druid must stop Druidism due to other pressures or the need to clear their head and re-evaluate their path. This is "the pause that refreshes". Many priesthoods and religion laymen participate in retreats and/or sabbaticals to "recharge their batteries" by doing something a little different. In the RDNA,

we have vigils and vision-quests too. Every vocation must have a vacation, and after a vacation, one must return or find a vocation.

Thus it is with Reformed Druidism during the equinoxes, that we remember our tradition of encouraging members to reappraise what they believe, and re-examine their positions on a few topics. Druids praise the cycles of Nature, but do not realize that they themselves wax and wane too. The sun and the moon do not always shine, the sea rises and falls, and leaves bud, grow and fall off. In the same way, a priest must now when to take a break, when to refuse the assumption of yet another duty, pull-back on what they do offer, and

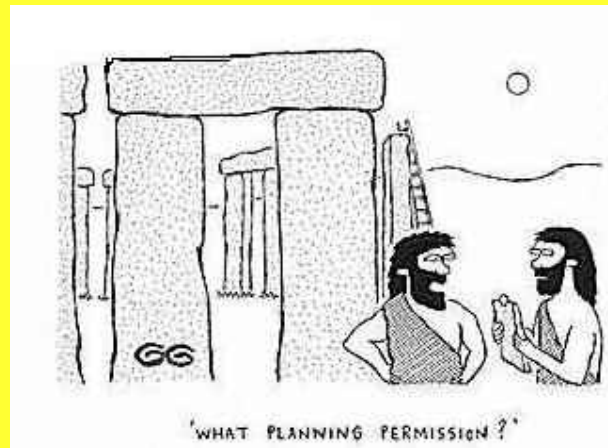
regenerate their energies. Even if you give your best, your "best" might get persistently worse without adequate rest. All work and no play makes Robin a dull Druid.

We are surrounded by stories that remind us of the need to adapt and choose those equilibrium points, this started when you first heard "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" as a young child. It is one of the hardest and longest-lasting challenges of life. You are potentially your own greatest ally and enemy, if you abandon moderation and balance in your Druidry. You will not be browbeaten or spoon-fed easy pat answers here in the Reform, you will need to do a bit or work, and of course, take a few breaks.



In a nutshell, for your own sakes, I recommend lazy louts to get off their duffs and achieve something ; and you over-achievers, yes you're amazing, but cut back a bit , look to areas of your life that might have been neglected. And the rest of us in the middle, well, find that working balance and keep on trucking.

These are my thoughts, I welcome feedback on what you think of the topic.



Q: What is the favorite chocolate drink of the Druids?

A: Ovate-ine.

Our Lack of Theology

By Norm Nelson, Patriarch of the Fifth Order, Braciaca



In his "Strategic Ambiguity" article in the latest Missal-Any, Mike discusses the "peculiarity" that RDNA lacks any firm definitions of what we believe (and/or don't).

I want to opine that this is deliberate.

First, look at our origins: since RDNA started as a protest against required attendance at religious services, it would have been pointless and counter-productive for us to take any stance that might alienate the very establishment from whom we were trying to get "chapel credit." It was important that we produce something that would be acceptable to as many people as possible, while antagonizing as few as possible.

We were always very careful to describe RDNA as "supplementing, not replacing" any other religious beliefs (and I think we were successful at doing exactly that).

A little research into "Druid" information (probably an encyclopedia article or two?) was enough to create our pantheon, using the names of ancient Celtic deities (while actually knowing very little about them).

Although the ritual consumption of "consecrated" food and drink is found in several traditions, the RDNA service itself was, obviously, modeled on a Christian Eucharist (communion service), since that was the background of most of us. (One important difference from Christianity is that the AD doesn't consecrate the waters, s/he invokes the Earth Mother to consecrate them and then verifies that it happened.)

Consequently, variations in the ritual are almost to be expected, and don't really bother me unless they run counter to the original intent of the service. I don't recall that the very first services included the "O Earth Mother, we praise thee" chant, for instance, and I know that the music for it was written a few months after we started.

We didn't have any sacred scriptures, not even the Early Chronicles, so a reading from our scriptures and consequent sermon wasn't feasible. A reading from some sacred (or meaningful (as defined by the AD)) text was substituted, followed by a meditation, usually without anyone trying to direct the thoughts of the worshipers.



I remember folks using the Psalms, the Wisdom books of the Bible and Apocrypha, Zen and other Buddhist readings, Confucian, Taoist, and Hindu texts, etc. Sometimes it was a secular poem or prose selection that had special significance for the leader. I don't remember anyone ever using the Koran, but I'm not going to say that nobody did!

Given the origin of RDNA, again, it was not a good idea for anybody to start specifying what a Druid could or could not believe, say, or do.

We didn't even have any formal leadership structure or officers until it was necessary to adopt by-laws to become an official campus organization in order to start receiving chapel credits.

After a couple years, it seemed like we needed someone or something that could "speak for RDNA" when the need arose, so the Council of Dalon ap Landu was created; membership was all present and former Carleton

(and direct offshoots) ADs.

In theory, the Council was empowered to decide official positions of RDNA should the need arise, but in practice it was impossible. It required a majority of the Council members to decide anything, and in the days before e-mail even getting a reply from a quorum was almost never reached. There were a couple minor decisions, but I don't remember what they were. (One, not minor, I think, was allowing the ordination of women as full ADs.)

The closest to a real function for the Council was probably the "Isaac" affair, when the "traditional" RDNA leadership didn't like the idea of establishing "orthodoxy" (which was obviously counter to our founding principles!) or of making us a part of the "greater Pagan world," which was anathema to those of us who remembered the original intention not to antagonize the major religions.

If anybody's interested, I'll be glad to expand on this some day, but this essay is long enough for now!



U.S. Military Chaplain's Handbook

In August of this year Ellen Evert Hopman (Saille) submitted the following basic facts about Druids for the new edition of the Military Chaplain's Handbook. The Whiteoak Order (www.whiteoakdruids.org) read and approved the document.

Basic Facts about Druids

- 1) Dietary restrictions - none unless the individual Druid is under a geas (spiritual/magical prohibition) to not eat a certain food.
- 2) Holidays; all Druids celebrate the major Fire Festivals which are Samhain (may be celebrated October 31/November 1 to November 11/12), Imbolc (May be celebrated February 1/2 to February 15 approximately, depending on the time of the annual thaw and when the local sheep are lactating). Beltaine (may be celebrated the last week of April to the first week of May) and Lughnasad (may be celebrated any time from the last week of July to the second week of August depending on when the harvest is ready). Some Druids celebrate the Solstices and Equinoxes as well.
- 3) Tools; common tools include a staff, a sickle (a curved reaping hook), crystals for healing work, one or more cauldrons, a bell-branch (a tree branch with bells attached), a wand, and one or more containers for sacramental drinks and offerings.
- 4) Ritual space: the ideal ritual space will have a fire, a water source such as a stream, lake, pond, the ocean, or a cauldron of water, and a tree. Sometimes one or more large rocks are used to mark a sacred circle. Circles of trees are special places for Druids or one old tree might become a ritual focus.
- 5) On formal ritual occasions a Druid will likely want to wear a ritual robe, a kilt, or other Celtic garb.
- 6) Druids may worship alone or in a "Grove", which is the term for a congregation of Druids.

7) Modern Druids offer fruits, vegetables, herbs, poetry, music, song, artwork and crafts to their Gods. Living animals are not harmed in any way.

8) Burial customs: a Druid may be buried by any means he or she has chosen either by internment in the ground or by cremation. American Druid Orders have voted for the "Awen" symbol to be placed on military markers and graves. Most Druids believe in reincarnation.



9) Common symbols that Druids may wear include the Triskel or Triskellion which is an ancient triple spiral design, oak leaves and acorns, the tri-line "Awen" symbol, and the "Druid Sigil" which is a circle with two lines through it.

10) Deities: Druids may be polytheist, monotheist, duo-theist, deist, pantheist, animist, pan-entheist, or any combination of the above. Most Druids pick a Patron God or Patroness Goddess to work with. Some deities that Druids work with include; Brighid, Lugh, The Daghdha, The Morrigan, Anu, Danu, Diancecht, Miach, Airmid, Goibniu, and many others...Druids believe in the inherent divinity of nature, and by extension the inherent sacredness of all natural features, plants, trees, animals, and people. Druids believe in the Otherworld and seek to form a close familiarity with the Spirits and departed ancestors from that realm of existence.

11) Some Druids sing or recite prayers in Gaelic or in other Celtic languages.

12) Druids may be male or female.

13) Druids perform divinations using Ogham sticks, Ogham stones, and by other methods.

14) Most Druids have a profound respect for and love of; history, intellectual growth, artistic creativity, and the pursuit of truth and justice.

Also published in White Oak's Eolas Magazine http://www.whiteoakdruids.org/eolas_magazine.cfm.
Published in A Druid Missal-Any with permission.



Available Again!

Dictionary of the Irish Language by E.G. Quin



First projected by the Irish Archaeological Society in 1852, work on the Dictionary of the Irish Language was initiated by the foremost Irish scholars of the time, John O`Donovan and Eugene O`Curry. Unfortunately, both were dead by 1862, but before his death O`Donovan had outlined how the Dictionary should be based on a thorough excerpting of older Irish manuscripts. The meanings of the words were to be supported by citations. These directions have been adhered to in the work as eventually compiled. In 1983 because of difficulty in keeping the individual fascicles in print and to facilitate handling, a compact edition was published and has just been reprinted again

in 2007. This contains all 24 parts photographically reduced into a handsome single volume.

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The Celtic Learning Project

Dear Friends and Members of the Celtic Learning Project,

The summer is passing all too quickly for many of us as well as the Celtic Learning Project as a whole. Nevertheless, we were able to carry out our mission of providing education to young and old alike in ways that are so much fun they might not have even known they were learning anything.

At the Connecticut Irish Festival we staffed an information booth, handed out fliers and told stories. We were greatly pleased to be joined by new member Frederick in the staffing of the table. A number of families and I were also greatly pleased to be a part of Vanessa's debut as a storyteller. Over the last year she researched Celtic stories, chose those most fitting to a mixed age audience, and went about the arduous task of memorizing and practicing the tale. Her gentle and flowing style provides a wonderful counterpoint to the war-like energy with which I generally perform. We look forward to more stories from Vanessa and more participation from Frederick in the future.

The New Haven Irish American Community Center's Irish Camp, in its first year of operation, invited the CLP to assist with cultural education. Kevin Kane, daughter Cat and I worked with the camp counselors to bring to life our popular Live Like a Celt Day once again. Campers learned about Irish history by making jewelry, grinding grain, making oat cakes and butter, learning some Irish and engaging in a number of other activities. The day ended with more storytelling and the defense of an Irish "homestead" against a cattle raider. Working through the Irish Camp was not only wonderful for the efficiency and cheerfulness of the staff, but also for the logistical benefits. CLP members prepared the programmatic materials for the day while the camp took care of all the administrative and "crowd control" issues so important in children's educational programming. We already have more ideas brewing for next year! An additional bonus was coverage from the New Haven Register via a photograph of campers and I during a storytelling session.

The near future for the Celtic Learning Project is coming into focus. We need your help to make it our presence a reality.

The Goshen Scottish Festival has invited us back again for this year's date of Saturday October 6th (<http://www.sasct.org/festival.html>). Executive Director Rob Kelly is hoping to represent the CLP but could greatly use a partner. This allows both CLP members time to take in the sights, sounds and tastes of the festival.

We have no current plans for an annual meeting. If you have suggestions for dates, times, places and formats for a meeting please let me know. In years past we have frequently had a potluck in an outdoor setting so that we may plan, become acquainted and enjoy the weather. Other options are certainly open for consideration.



The continuation of the Celtic Learning Project depends upon all of continued participation. I ask you to send in your renewal form, available from our web site, with your check as soon as you can. This will give us the funding we need to continue programs such as Live Like a Celt. More importantly, it will be a pledge from you to support us with your presence in the coming year.

Thank you!

C.J. May
President
Celtic Learning Project
www.celtlearn.org



Cherry Hill Seminary Announces Chaplaincy Program

California Prison Chaplain Leads Initiative to Educate Pagan Ministers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BETHEL, Vt., Aug. 14, 2007 - Cherry Hill Seminary, the first graduate-level Pagan ministry training institution in the U.S., announces the addition of a Chaplaincy Program directed by Patrick McCollum, who served as the first Wiccan chaplain in the California prison system.

"There are a tremendous number of requests for Wiccan chaplains across the United States," said McCollum, author of *The Wiccan Chaplain's Guide for the California Prison System*. "The need has grown exponentially within correctional institutions just as the interest in Wicca and Paganism has grown within the rest of the nation. The problem is that many of the current chaplains are not trained in spiritual paths other than Judeo-Christian religions. And, while there are well-intentioned Pagan people who would like to go and minister to those in correctional facilities, most have no professional training to deal with life-and-death issues and they seldom have the right answers to address the conditions these prisoners face.

The program, a two-year certificate administered by the seminary's Public Ministry department, seeks to train Pagans in effective ministry in hospitals, hospice work, prisons and the military.

"Cherry Hill Seminary is the first Pagan seminary in the United States to address this challenge from an academic point of view," McCollum says. "The curriculum includes essays, research, role-playing, internships and may be difficult for the typical layperson. It's a Bachelor-level/ Master-level course of study."

The program begins with the Fall 2007 semester, with the "Survey of Chaplaincy" course taught by McCollum. All Pagans interested in pursuing their religion as chaplains are invited to enroll.

"We are in the unique position to set the standard for Pagan chaplaincies in this country," said M. Macha NightMare, chair of the Public Ministry department at Cherry Hill. "We hope to set a high one in which everyone, Pagans and non-Pagans, can have confidence."

Cherry Hill Seminary courses are open to accepted students, who may apply to for a single class or a certificate program. Applications will be accepted through the first week of September.

Cherry Hill Seminary, an incorporated educational entity, is a Pagan seminary program based on the Communitarian philosophy of the sacredness of connections and community building. Cherry Hill Seminary offers online courses designed to impart a graduate-level Pagan clergy education. For more information, visit www.cherryhillseminary.org.



CFP: Celtic Cultural Studies

Celtic Cultural Studies is an independently-published and peer-reviewed interdisciplinary academic journal which is currently seeking submissions. It was officially launched on 1st May 2000 and is only available online, without subscription and free of charge. Its aim is to publish papers on diverse subjects relating to all cultures from the Celtic territories and their diasporas, from all historical periods and geographical locations, within a broadly Cultural Studies perspective. As such, the journal does not limit itself to traditions specifically associated with Celtic languages per se but embraces consideration of issues in Scottish Studies, Cornish Studies, Irish Studies, Welsh Studies and so forth.

Within the limits of what can be or has been understood as Celtic culture(s), there are no restrictions with regard to subject matter, historical period, geographical provenance, or academic discipline. Papers at Celtic Cultural Studies are grouped into themed issues and published on a perennial, rather than periodical basis. As such, each issue is an open-ended entity and contributions for any given issue are always welcome. The currently-available issues are Cultural Politics, Music and Identity, Early Literature, Celtic Science Fiction and Fantasy, and Contemporary Issues in Manx Culture. We are always interested in producing other themed issues with guest editors.

Academic papers in English of up to 20,000 words are invited for inclusion in Celtic Cultural Studies. Papers are also invited in any of the modern Celtic languages or Scots, provided that the author also submits their own English translation for bilingual publication. Queries and submissions can be sent to C.W. Sullivan III, at sullivanc@ecu.edu, Amy Hale at hale.amy@spcollege.edu, or Steve Sweeney Turner at editorial@celtic-cultural-studies.com

Please visit our website at www.celtic-cultural-studies.com for our submissions guidelines.



UC Berkeley's Tree-Sitters Can Stay, Judge Rules

By Carolyn Jones, Chronicle Staff Writer
San Francisco Chronicle
Thursday, September 13, 2007

Berkeley's tree-sitters can stay in their perches despite their collection of propane tanks and increasing sanitary problems, a judge ruled Wednesday.

Alameda County Superior Court Judge Richard Keller denied UC Berkeley's request to oust the protesters, who took up residence in the Memorial Stadium oak grove nine months ago after the university announced it wanted to clear part of the grove for a sports training center.

Keller said the university did not supply enough evidence to show an immediate threat of fire or health problems and scheduled a full hearing for Oct. 1, 10 days after the court hears a trio of lawsuits intended to stop the sports facility.

The university asked for the court order Monday when police found several propane tanks in the tree houses. There have also been an increasing number of excrement and urine spills from the tree-sitters' buckets, UC Berkeley spokesman Dan Mogulof said.

"We have a long tradition of honoring and protecting free speech on this campus, but we also have to protect the safety of the students, community and the people in the trees," Mogulof said. "This is becoming a small village, and we're seeing all the same sanitation and safety issues you see in any small village."

Doug Buckwald, an activist supporting the half-dozen or so tree-sitters, said he wasn't surprised by the judge's ruling because he said the tree-sitters have an excellent safety record. He also said he wasn't surprised UC asked for the restraining order.

"UC has been trying to do a number of things to stop the protest lately," he said. "They didn't like all the coverage we got at the Cal-Tennessee football game, and they really want this to be over with."

Another big crowd is expected at the grove Saturday, when the Cal football team plays Louisiana Tech. The university built a fence around the tree-sitters before the Tennessee game Sept. 1 in an effort to protect the protesters from rowdy football fans.

Scots "Mither Tongue' Goes Online



An archive of the Scots language is now available all over the world thanks to a comprehensive new website.

Researchers at Glasgow University have completed work on the online resource, which contains more than four million words in Scots and Scottish English.

As well as meaning and usage, the project also has audio links, allowing people to hear words being spoken.

The site, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, can be accessed at www.scottishcorpus.ac.uk.

People from the US, Australia, China, Japan and South America have already logged on to use the service, as well as people in Scotland.

The website currently includes text from 1945 up to the present day, with researchers working on expanding it.

They are building up a new resource for older varieties of language, dating from 1700 to 1945.

Once completed this should allow people to trace the development of features of Scots and Scottish English over time.

Project researcher, Dr Wendy Anderson, said: "The Scots language is a source of interest across the world as it is one aspect of a long and flourishing cultural heritage.

"The website will be a useful language resource for academic researchers and students, language learners and teachers, dictionary writers and secondary school language teachers, not to mention for the large number of general users who just want to satisfy a curiosity about the Scots language."

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/scotland/6943088.stm>



Iceman Died from Head Trauma, Not Arrow

By Nicole Winfield, Associated Press Writer

Wed Aug 29, 8:48 AM ET

Researchers studying Iceman, the 5,000-year-old mummy found frozen in the Italian Alps, now believe he died of head trauma, not the wound of an arrow.

Two months ago, researchers in Switzerland published an article in the Journal of Archaeological Science saying the man known as Oetzi died after an arrow tore a hole in an artery beneath his left collarbone, leading to massive blood loss, shock and heart attack.

But radiologists, pathologists and other researchers, using new forensic information and CAT scans, now say they believe blood loss from the arrow wound only made Oetzi lose consciousness. They now say he died either from hitting his head on a rock when he passed out or because his attacker hit him in the head.

The researchers presented their findings Monday at the Institute for Mummies and the Iceman at the

European Academy in Bolzano. The institute was launched in July to coordinate research into Oetzi, whose remains are housed in a nearby museum.

In a statement, the academy said the findings reopened the debate over Oetzi's death, particularly since they took into account the way his body was found: face down, with his left arm across his chest.

The researchers believe he fell backward, but was turned onto his stomach by his attacker, who then pulled out his arrow — leaving the arrowhead imbedded in Oetzi's shoulder.

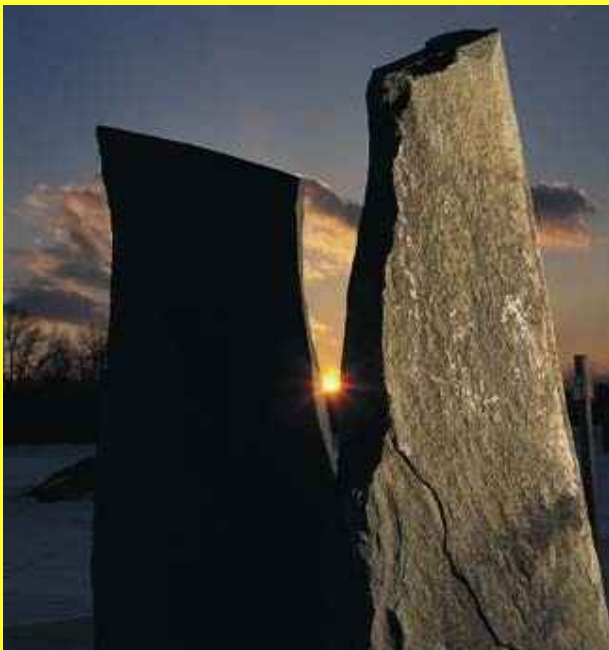
In a paper published in the archaeological magazine *Germania*, the researchers said they determined that Oetzi assumed his final position before rigor mortis set in. They also said that based on his good health and the equipment found with him, he belonged to a social class not accustomed to manual labor.

The researchers were Andreas Lippert, a prehistory professor at the University of Vienna, Paul Gostner and Patrizia Pernter, radiologists at the Bolzano regional hospital, and Eduard Egarter Vigl, a pathologist at the hospital.

Oetzi was found by hikers in 1991. In 2000, his body was temporarily thawed so researchers could take samples to study. They found that his last meal included unleavened bread and some greens. He also had eaten venison — strengthening the theory that he was a hunter.

While little else is known about Oetzi, he carried a bow, a quiver of arrows and a copper ax.

From http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20070829/ap_on_re_eu/italy_iceman_s_demise



Fall Equinox 2007 Sunrise and Sunset Gatherings at the UMass Sunwheel

Sept. 22 & 23, Saturday & Sunday
6:45 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. both days

You are invited to witness the passing of the seasons by joining Dr. Judith Young and members of the Dept. of Astronomy to watch the Sun rise and set over the tall standing stones in the U.Mass. Sunwheel for the Autumnal Equinox of 2007. The sunrise and sunset events will be held on both Saturday and Sunday, September 22 and 23, 2007. Visitors for the sunrise viewing should arrive at 6:45 a.m., and visitors for the sunset viewing should arrive at 6:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. These events will not only celebrate the Autumnal Equinox, but also mark the 10th anniversary of

the Sunwheel gatherings. During the past decade, over 8,000 members of the public have attended the seasonal Sunwheel events.

For those interested in learning about the sky, there will be a presentation which will include the significance of the solstices and equinoxes, the cause of the seasons, the changes in the Sun's position in the sky during the year, the phases of the Moon, and the story of building the Sunwheel. There will also be an explanation of the Moon's 18.6-year cycle, since 2005-7 is the peak of this cycle, also called the Major Lunar Standstill. Bring your questions, your curiosity, and dress warmly for cool temperatures when the Sun is down; the gatherings typically last an hour.

A \$3 donation is requested to help with the cost of the additional stones and exhibit expansion which are planned for the Sunwheel. Sunwheel T-shirts and sweatshirts will also be available for purchase.

About the Autumnal Equinox:

The Autumnal Equinox is the first day of Autumn in the northern hemisphere. It is also the day the Sun disappears from view for six months (i.e. sets) as seen from the North pole, and the day the Sun rises into the sky to be visible for six months as seen from the South pole. On the equinox, any observer located on the Earth's equator will see the Sun pass directly overhead at local noon, and that person will cast no shadow at noon. For all observers on Earth (excluding the North and South poles), the Sun on the equinox rises due East and sets due West, is up for 12 hours and down for 12 hours, illuminating all latitudes. From the Sunwheel here in Amherst, we observe a very beautiful sight as the equinox Sun rises and sets through the stone portals in the East and West directions. This year, the instant of the Autumnal Equinox is 5:51 a.m. EDT on Sept. 23.

The UMass Sunwheel is located south of McGuirk Alumni Stadium, just off Rocky Hill Road. The Sunwheel can easily be reached from the center of Amherst, following Amity St. to the west, on the right hand side of the road about 1/4 mile after crossing University Drive. The gatherings are held in all types of weather except rain. In the event of rain, visitors are encouraged to visit the Sunwheel on their own at any time.

For more information see:

<http://www.astro.umass.edu/~young/gatherinfo.html> and <http://www.umass.edu/sunwheel>



Fall Equinox will occur this year on September 23, 2007 at 2:52 a.m., Pacific Standard Time. Grove Equinox High Day services will take place later in the day at 3 p.m.

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This is the end of the Summer Solstice issue



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Webmastered by Mike Scharding
