

Circle of Grandmothers

Volume 6

Number 2

June 1999

Announcing The Sixth Annual Council of Grandmothers

From Judy O'Leary

Greetings. Ruth Gardner and I just returned from an overnight at the COD Ranch in Oracle, Arizona and a conference with Steve Malkin, the owner, regarding the October 21st to 26th Grandmother Gathering. WOW! Improvements in the buildings include more sleeping quarters, bathrooms and showers, a door here and there for privacy. On the land, Sunrise Point has been landscaped with boulders, plants, trees. The project started near the main house last year is blooming with flowers. Camping and RV parking has been moved to a new location behind and up, near the barn. A naturalist has laid out, marked and mapped walking trails. Wilma Hugget has created a permanent walk path to her home from behind the office. And a terraced organic garden is in the works with composting and recycling to be in place when we arrive. I am impressed with Steve's promises, commitment, and follow through. It feels wonderful there.

The Gathering Committee has met faithfully, monthly since February. Much prayer, thought and work led to this year's theme "Dance the Community - Birth the Potential: The Challenge of the Zeroes." Our opening ceremony will be the planting of a



First Council of Grandmothers, Cielo en Tierra. Those present were: Janet Cutting (NYC), Mary (Tommy Thomas's helper), Nancy Masland (Tucson), June Sampson (Boulder), Ruth Gardner (Tucson), Sister Virginia Barta (Dragoon, AZ), Florence Douglas (Eugene, OR), Cora Miller (Tucson), Shirley Tassencourt (Dragoon), Mary Diamond (Fort Huachuca, AZ), Tommy Thomas (Tucson), Virginia Hall (Tubac, AZ), Beacon (Silver City, NM), Alegra Ahlquist (Dragoon), Fern Cleghorn (Florence, OR), Detta Lange (Totnes, England), and Kit Wilson (Phoenix).

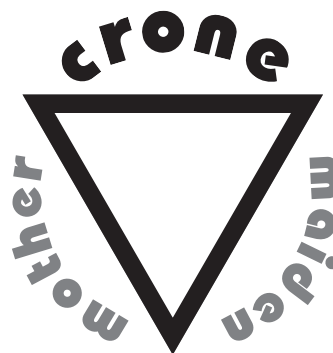
Grandmother Tree. This year's program will include rituals, arts, movement, voice, and a Caleigh. There will be several circles of everyone and small circles will meet daily. Absolutely, positively, kitchen & food prep will

be hired and no one will have to leave to do service, except for each other.

On a personal note, on May 12, my teacher, friend and love, Richard crossed over unexpectedly. The support of Spirit, grandmothers, family and friends is a gift and I am very grateful. I am now living with Ruth Gardner, who opened her heart and is sharing her home, understands and listens to my stories and grief while providing the balance of humor, with great love.

I am blessed! How about you?

Namasté.



When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

A Pilgrimage for Peace

By Judy Moore

Two months worth of mail lay on the kitchen table the night I returned from my pilgrimage to Mexico. I was bone weary. Quickly I browsed through the stack. My eyes fell on the Grandmother's Newsletter and I eagerly sat down to read it.....

My family protested when I announced that I was going on a pilgrimage to Mexico. Of course, they had heard Mexico was unsafe and on the verge of revolution. In my heart I knew I would be safe, but reassuring my family was another thing.

Three years ago I had an apparition of the Guadalupe. Now, after a period of intense spiritual awakening, I felt called to drive in my '86 Bronco all the way to

the Yucatan. It would be a pilgrimage for La Paz de la Mundo – World Peace. I knew I had to be at Chichinitza for the spring equinox. My dear friend agreed to accompany me.

All across Mexico hearts opened up to us. I prayed with women for the healing of our beloved planet in cathedrals, small churches, the streets, jungles, pyramids, sacred sites, market places, and garages waiting for the mechanic. I was taken to places where Guadalupe appeared where I prayed with the women who kept the shrines and held the faith for the world. By the door of the cathedral in Guanajuato an ancient woman sat. She was probably over 100 years old. I dropped to my knees and we be-

gan to pray. It is impossible to describe the power of that prayer. I could hardly walk afterwards.

Everywhere I went I experienced women lovingly holding the faith of the heart, despite unbelievable poverty and political oppression. I can still hear their voices singing and raised in prayer – the most beautiful sound possible. My journey strung a string of precious pearls together, each woman of faith being one bead. My necklace is called faith, the stuff miracles are made of.

As the millennium approaches we the family of humans face what the prophecies call the End Times. The Hopi tell us that we have a choice – to experience extreme purification or choose a road of healing. We all know what the odds are. Y2K looms at our back door with all its global ills. Imagine for just a moment that we can heal this beloved planet. Allow ourselves to believe that each of us have a gift to give that will make a difference. Together we form a powerful force of healing, beyond our comprehension. We are the seeds of change. We are the mustard seed. We are the Awakening of the Divine Feminine. Heaven on Earth—Here we come!

Mother hold me in your arms

Grandmother sing to me

Sister inspire me

Daughter weave a blanket of beautiful tomorrows. ▼▼▼

Editor's Corner

by Kit Wilson in Phoenix

Sometimes I can't believe that life is still such a juggle.

Here I am at 8:06 AM on a beautiful cool Saturday morning in early June, sitting, of all places, at a Discount Tire Shop in downtown Phoenix waiting to have my tires balanced. I am imagining that all of you are free from such chores, that you are greeting the sun in some glorious natural setting and moving at a leisurely pace into your day. And I wish I could drive down the street a block or two, park my car in front of another shop, and in 45 minutes for a nominal fee pay to have my life balanced as easily as I am attending to my tires.

So much for that.

This is an important issue of the Newsletter. It contains the registration for the 1999 Council of Grandmothers – the only one you will receive. Act promptly! Following the gathering in October 1998 the volunteers who are working on the planning made several important decisions: 1. The group decided to return to the COD ranch in Oracle in 1999, and 2. Because space is limited at the COD, and also because of a desire to preserve the intimacy of our large circles, the group decided to limit participation to the first fifty (plus

or minus a few) women to register. This means that some of us, including me, who typically procrastinate, may be very disappointed grannies come October.

I've learned recently that **Tommie Thomas**, one of the 16 Grandmothers to attend the first gathering at Cielo en Tierra in 1994, died sometime late in 1998. If anyone knows the details please send me information. In the December '96 issue of this Newsletter Ruth Gardner wrote about Tommie: "Honored by civic leaders, family and friends, Tommie Thomas was her usual pragmatic self as she accepted testimonies of public figures and grateful friends talking about her tireless contributions to the community of Tucson. Awarded her were plaques and tributes by loving, appreciative receivers of her services through the years. The occasion was her retirement, whatever that means, and the date was just prior to her seventy-sixth birthday".

The sad news about **Judy O'Leary's** Richard elicited a heartwarming response from Tucson area grandmothers. Many of us were able to be with her at the funeral. And **Ruth Gardner**, whose

Editor's Corner continued on page 7

The **Circle of Grandmothers** Newsletter is a labor of love published five or six times per year. Subscriptions are \$10 for a January to December year (simplifies bookkeeping).

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When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

Poet's Corner

Shape Changing, May 1999

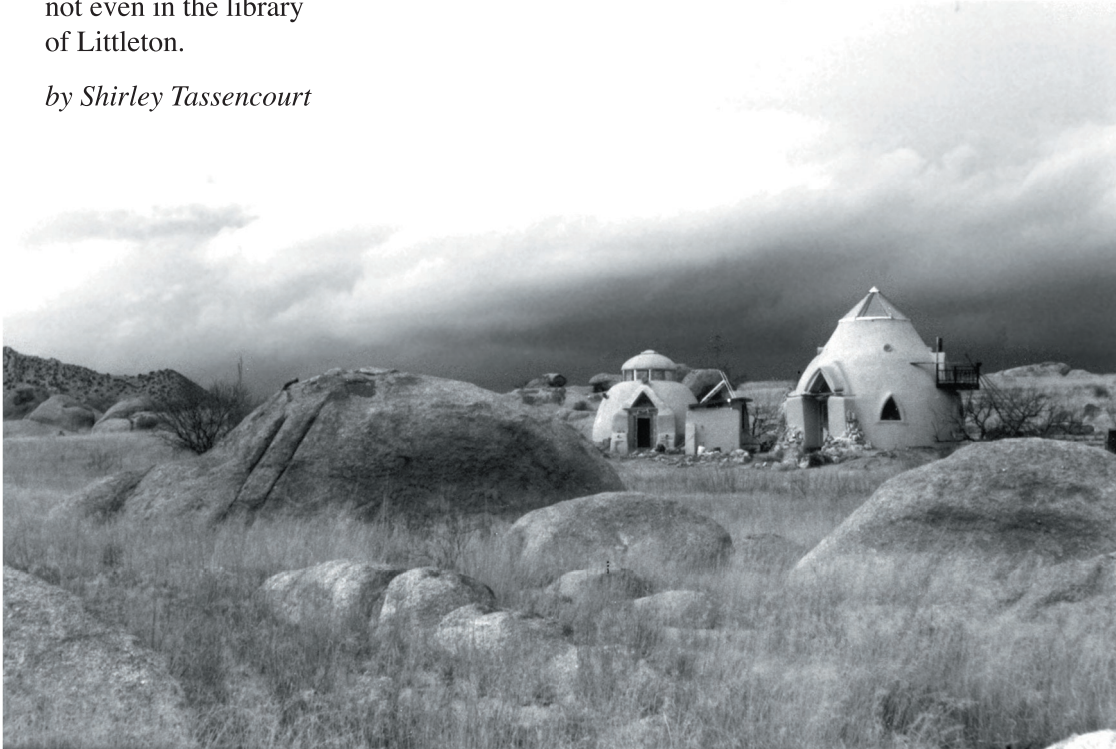
We come to this flowering earth
with such large feet, our Karma
trampling on the roses.

Yet under my heavy tread the mint,
the artemesia releases a rare scent
and I wonder what is gift and what
guilt in this flowering world.

In the wild spring gale some
call destiny that tosses and turns
us all, the frenzied pansies
wink and blink singing (over and over)
“Nothing dies, Nothing dies”.

not even in Kosovo
not even in the library
of Littleton.

by Shirley Tassencourt



Shirley's homestead is set in high desert grassland, among the boulders of Texas Canyon near Dagoon, Arizona. The meditation dome, her living quarters and a recently added library are constructed of sandbags. The buildings were designed by Shirley and built by her and her grandson. Here she tends her vegetable and flower garden and contemplates her world.

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A Letter to the Circle of Grandmothers By Joyce Kovelman

When I read the latest issue of The Circle of Grandmothers newsletter, I realized how long it has been since I saw most of you, and how very much I miss all of you. I was saddened to learn of Allegra's lengthy illness and buoyed by her gradual recovery, calm acceptance and deep learning, and wish to express my love and respect to Nana Gaia for her loving service to Allegra.

I've learned that Detta Lang and Malka Golden-Wolf will be at the 100th Anniversary Celebration of The Hague, The Netherlands. I, too, have been invited to speak at this momentous occasion and look forward to meeting with them at that time. (*The Celebration took place in May – ED*) I am also trying to locate Blossom Saskill, and hope someone will have her address or can let me know how she is. (*I am looking for Blossom too. ED*).

Now, for some happenings in my part of the world. I felt all of your love and energy while helping to coordinate "Belonging to Mother Earth" in Virginia Beach last fall. I enjoyed Shirley Tassencourt's article about her experiences at this gathering, which brought together almost 600 Indigenous peoples from all over the world, many meeting with one another for the first time, along with dedicated non-Indigenous folks helping to bring forth the wisdom of the planet, and to birth a new era of possibility. This gathering was awesome, and its ability to transform is

still gathering energy and continues to reverberate out into the world.

The women of all generations at "Belonging to Mother Earth" have created a Grandmothers Council of Wisdom which, when complete, will include 20 women from the world over. All skin colors, all continents, many religions and ethnicities will be represented. The circle of four younger women of the mothers and sisters generation comprise Rabbiah Al-Nur (Native & Afro American), Katherine Cheshire (Hopi), Debra Latham (Costa Rica), and Kaylynn Two-Trees (Lakota, Afro-American).

The elder circle is only partially formed and presently includes Sheila Hansen (Lakota), Sarah James (Gwichen), Yvonne King (Lakota), Joyce Kovelman (Turtle Island), Ruth Schneider (India & USA), Grace Smith Yellow-Hammer (Dineh), and Chieftess Del Wihongi (Maori, N.Z.). Del will be inviting Grandmothers from the Southern hemisphere, especially from the South Pacific to join our Council. Debra Latham is finding our Latina grandmothers and her mother, Ruth Schneider, is asking a Santal Grandmother from India. Rabbiah has found a grandmother from the Caribbean, and will invite another from Africa. Grandmothers from Asia and Europe will complete our circle.

"Belonging to Mother Earth" and similar gatherings have revealed that

"Protocol is the Way." Yet, protocol often gets in the way, allowing negotiation and possibility to also slip away. Grandmothers Council hopes to reach consensus and agreement on many of the issues that now divide our nations, tribes and communities. With consensus reaching into our communities and villages, we open the way for working with one another, and for achieving a sustainable Peace in our world and even, in our lifetime.

One of our first projects is for Grandmothers to reach out to the world's children, as well as to each of our own grandchildren. "The Seventh Generation", children born over the last two decades, are truly special. They have come to our planet with special gifts and abilities. We need to provide them tools, techniques, and love and support to begin the healing work of our planet. Like all flowers they require light, guidance and nourishment to grow and to bear fruit.

The Grandmothers Council of Wisdom welcomes your interest, and would like to hear how we may mutually support your own endeavors and needs. For more information please contact Joyce Kovelman

FAX: (818) 360-8126. E-Mail: ASOULI@aol.com.

Peace and Blessings
Shalom



Circling With Kit And Barrie

The call came out early in the year. Learn Peer-Spirit Circling with the help of Kit Wilson and Barrie Ryan. Make a firm commitment to attend six all-day sessions from February to September.

Six of us signed on: Judy, Joanne, Star, Ilsa, Pauline, and I. Did we really guess what a profoundly absorbing and challenging ride this was going to be? Kit and Barrie probably did. They had studied with Christina Baldwin, author of "Calling the Circle", and they knew

how much we had to learn. All of us remembered the efforts to introduce "Circles" at last year's Grandmother Gathering. Now we were going to see if we could learn how to facilitate small groups next fall using this remarkable approach.

We have now had four sessions. One weekend each month Kit comes from Phoenix to join Barrie in Tucson for our nine a.m. Saturday meeting. One member of our circle provides the comforts of a lovely home and substantial

By Barbara Furniss, Green Valley, Arizona

refreshments to sustain the high energy level of the next seven hours. We watch how the circle is "closed" (i.e. set in motion) and "opened" at the finish. We share responsibility for meditations, exercise breaks, being the "Guardian" and the Time-keeper. We practice attentive listening and the principles of Peer Spirit Circling. Above all, as we experience the support of the group, we begin to appreciate the beauty and power of the form.

It has been quite a ride!

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

Last Name _____ First _____

Lodge me with _____

Council Of Grandmothers Sixth Annual Gathering

**October 21 to 26, 1999
Registration**

Check One:

1. **Lodging**, Meals, Events, 6 Days And 5 Nights _____

2. **Camping**, Meals, Events, 6 Days And 5 Nights _____

Check: RV Space _____ Tent _____

Gathering Fee: \$ 385/Person

Scholarship Contribution, Many Blessings: \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Make check payable to Council of Grandmothers. Return registration form by
August 15, 1999 - Deadline.

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Volunteer: check all applicable

Work at event _____ Service to an Elder _____ Talent _____

Other _____

Last Name _____ First _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ E-mail/Fax _____

Lodge Me With: _____

Special Needs: _____

Questions: _____

Refunds: Available (less \$25) when received in writing by September 15, 1999.

Release:

On October 21 THROUGH 26, 1999, I will be a guest at the COD Ranch for a gathering of the Council of Grandmothers. As such, I hereby agree to hold the COD Ranch and The Council of Grandmothers harmless in the event I am injured during my stay at the RANCH, or any facilities associated with this gathering. I or my insurance company will cover all my medical and liability expenses.

Signature _____ Date _____

Name (print) _____

Remit to:

Judy O'Leary
P.O. Box 50512
Tucson, AZ 85703
(520) 792-6459
email: gmCouncil@aol.com

If you are unable to attend, please pass this to a friend!

Indomitable Elizabeth - A Sequel

By *Barrie Ryan*

The last time I wrote about Elizabeth Kubler-Ross for this newsletter her autobiography, **The Wheel of Life**, had just been published. (1997)

At the end of that amazing report of her transformative journey, she had reported that she had had massive strokes in 1995 and was now paralyzed on her left side. The ensuing struggle with her pain and dependency had left her grievously depressed – just hoping to die.

The public response of concern for her was great. Some wondered how the woman who changed the world's attitude toward death and dying was unable to cope herself with these challenging changes.

Kit Wilson and I had a chance to honor Elizabeth last year (98) at a dinner in Scottsdale where she was not only to receive The Lifetime Achieve-

ment Award from The Gladys Taylor McGarey Medical Foundation, but was also to be the keynote speaker for the evening.

And there was Elizabeth in her wheelchair at the long table on stage! She asked to speak earlier than her proposed time because she was tiring, but when she spoke she was quintessential Kubler-Ross: lucid and forthright as ever. She knew her physical limits now, she said, and so would speak for no more than 20 minutes. In addition to anecdotes about her experiences with the contemporary health care "scene" and her concern for quality care in general, she offered the revelation that she had been working with a man named Joseph who was helping her regain use of her left arm (she raised it in a wave)

and was helping her approach her disabilities with more patience and hope.

She asked Joseph to stand up. No last name. No explanation of his particular gifts. But she said it was he who had called her and said he wanted to work with her. He had called, she said, on the very day she had been seriously contemplating suicide. As she rolled away from the platform to leave, again, indomitable Elizabeth, she waved. We gave her a standing ovation.

A few months ago Elizabeth and Joseph were in Tucson doing a healing workshop at St. Francis in the Foothills church. I was unable to attend, but if any other grandmothers did go, it would be wonderful to hear how that went.



Editor's Corner continued from page 2 — memories of her own recent losses make her particularly understanding, was in a position to offer safe haven. I'm sure you will all want to join in as we continue to support Judy in working through her grief.

We are beginning to come together to play as well. Since the last Newsletter there have been at least two lunchtime gatherings – one in February hosted by **Barbara Furniss** in Green Valley and one in late April organized by **Nancy Masland** in Tucson. I missed both, but from the many reports they were spirited comings-together.

Shirley Tassencourt and **Allegra Ahlquist** used my Phoenix home as a way station in their travels to and from Minnesota last week. They were attending a three day rite-of-passage initiation for young men crossing the threshold into manhood. Shirley's grandson Dominic, known to many of you for his involvement in the construction of Shirley and Allegra's sandbag homes, was one of the six initiates. The ritual was led by Martin Prechtel, the "jaguar shaman."

With the news of Kosovo and Littleton looming large these last months, it seems hopeful to hear of so much activity focused on peace and healing. Several of you sent additional information about the Indigenous Wisdom and Healing conference in Virginia Beach last October. I've included a letter from **Joyce Kovelman** in California. **Mary Ann McClellan** (Louisiana) and her husband Medicine Hawk were also among the participants. We missed them both at the Grandmother's Council but know they represented us well. It was obviously an important event for all who attended and, hopefully has reverberated into the larger human community.

Last week here in Phoenix son **John** my Newsletter partner, attended an international multi-racial, multi-cultural conference on peacekeeping and mediation. Over 2000 attendees from all over the world! And the letter in this issue from **Judy Moore** in New Mexico tells of her own peace pilgrimage into Mexico. All these reflections that humanity is not yet ready to throw

in the towel are a comfort as I hold the tragedies of the headlines close to my grieving heart.

"Grama Pat" Bauderer writes from June Lake, California about her travels to Europe to distribute her book *Grandmothers Are Instinctively Wise*, published in 1996.

And finally, an Email from our multi-talented grandmother **Maya Levy**, who remains happily at home in Louisiana. Maya reports that her new book, *Acting Scenes & Monologues for Young Women*, is available through Amazon.com. She is "plugging away" at her novel, finishing a commission painting for a hospital, and preparing for a show in July. In her free time she's trying to paint her living room and kitchen.

All of which makes me feel that we are, in fact, speaking, and that although things are not yet "...all right with the world," there are signs that God is definitely in Her heaven and all we need is a little bit more patience. ▼▲▼

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