



Shining Lakes News

A Newsletter for Shining Lakes Grove, A.D.F.



Fall Equinox 2008

Vol. 15, No. 4

Reflections on Our “Altar” native Religion



Just before every High Day rite we do, I walk around the nemeton (or the room at the Ed Center or the Friends Meeting House) to look at the various altars. Partly I’m just making sure that everything is set up correctly, because I’m the Senior Druid and that’s part of my job. But I also consider it a part of my personal ritual preparation. Our altars have evolved over the course of the 15 years that we’ve been around, and being around them reminds me of the relationships our Grove has built with our Gods during that time, and the many people who have attended our many rituals.

Over on the Shining Ones altar, I see the statues we got for Lugh, Bríd, and Aren (well, it’s a statue of Dionysus, but he looks a lot like our vision of Aren) that we bought from Sacred Source several years ago. We ran a pledge drive to get donations to replace our old statues, which had gotten chipped throughout the years. (Terra cotta statues may be a lot lighter than marble ones, but they sure don’t last as long!) Our current statues are looking a little beaten up, but we can probably wait a year or two before needing to replace them. I also see the puffy stuffed sun that was designed to be attached to a child’s school backpack zipper, to make it easier to open. I saw it on my journey back from Muin Mound Madness in 1998, and since we didn’t have any kind of representation for Bel on our Shining Ones altar at the time, I thought it would be perfect.

On the Nature Spirits altar, of course, we have the Stag Head, which Fox carved for us back in the early days of our Spring Hunt. I remember when he, Kestrel, and I went out to the place where we would end up placing our permanent shrine to Mannanan, and did a group meditation to discover what symbol the Stag God wanted us to know him by. The one we

came up with is currently painted on the Stag Head—take a look the next time you see it. If you look closely, you may notice that the ears aren’t quite finished! But I can’t complain too much, as my own woodcarving ability is limited to whittling small sticks out of slightly larger sticks.

For the last few years, our nemeton has had a herm set up as a space for people to make offerings to the Greek gods. We set it up at our Lughnasadh festival back in 2006, and we’ve used it in our High Day rites, as well as the Greek rites we’ve done at our Lughnasadhs. It’s a simple wooden post

adorned with a wire caduceus (the wand of Hermes), with a flat wooden board at the base for offerings. I think we still need to come up with a portable version for our indoor winter rites, maybe that can be an An Bruane project this fall.

And with Samhain coming up, how can I not think about the Ancestors altar? The fake skull, that I always call “Mr. Skullhead” (10 cartoon geek points to those who can identify the source) sits prominently on top, and the plaque with the names of our Grove member’s own Ancestors stands beneath it. Spaced around it are the items that our members have brought in to remind them of their Ancestors, including the piggy—er, tiger-bank that my grandmother made for me when I was three years old, the tobacco favored by Candy Brockman’s father, and the bottle of whiskey that was donated to us before I even joined SLG. I honestly don’t

know who donated it to us, but I guess the Gods know, and that’s what’s important. The glittery altar cloth—as well as the golden one on the Shining Ones altar—was donated by Gen Stoyak; she and I picked them out at a store in Salem, MA, whose pagan staff were happy to know their cloths would grace druid altars 800 miles away.



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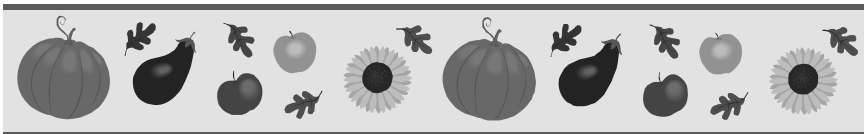
Over here is the well, which is—well, a hole in the ground. If not for the ring of stones around its edge, I imagine we'd have people falling in on a regular basis. (At our indoor rites we use a nice ceramic bowl Rodney Cox got for us on one of his own festival trips.) We put offerings of silver into the Well at each rite. And every four years or so, we dig through the accumulated dirt, sort out the silver, and rebury it at the bottom. I can only wonder what archaeologists would make of the 14 years' worth of offerings if they excavated it!

On the opposite side of our circle is our fire pit, where we kindle the ritual flame and make offerings of oil, tobacco, grain, and pretty much anything that burns. If you've been to one of our Beltaine rites, you'll certainly remember the May King or Queen, and a lot of other people, jumping over it.

And in between the two is our bilé, the pole that acts as the Tree during our rite to connect the worlds. For indoor rites, we have a portable one that's about eight feet tall. In the nemeton, the pole we have now is around 15 feet tall; it used to be about 20 but time has taken its toll. Back in our first year we cut the bilé from an aspen tree, which has multiple trunks growing from the same root system, so one trunk can be cut without killing the whole tree. The bilé holds our Maypole ribbons at Beltaine, and our Stag dancers rub their horns against it at Fall Equinox, which either sounds a lot dirtier than it should, or sounds exactly as dirty as it should.

I could go on at length about every last item on all of our altars, but this newsletter only has so much space. I just wanted to remind everyone who reads this that they are welcome to bring their own altar items to our High Day rites, and place them on our Grove altars, for permanent use or just for the duration of the rite. With November approaching, I especially want to remind people to bring items that remind them of their own Ancestors to either or both of our Samhain rites. It's a great way not only to help you remember your own Ancestors, but also to help the rest of us get to know them as well.

Yours in service to the Kindreds and the Grove,
Rev. Rob Henderson, Senior Druid



Do you have an announcement you'd like to share with your Grovemates? How about a recipe, poem, blessing, or book review? Have you visited any shops or restaurants that seem particularly pagan-friendly? We're always looking for good stuff to fill these pages! SLN is put together the week before each equinox and solstice rite, and the Yule issue will be here faster than you think! Call Gen the Chronicler at (734) 663-2693 or send her an e-mail at gstoyak@hotmail.com.

Thank you to everyone who helped with our food drive at Lughnasadh! We collected 67 pounds of food for Food Gatherers—more than last year!



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Not Too Deep

By Jude Howison

I was going to write a deep and meaningful article about the many contributions our past and current members have made to Shining Lakes Grove, but I just couldn't seem to get it going. Then I thought, "Hmmm, perhaps Someone is trying to tell me to keep it simple." So, here we have it. A simple and heartfelt thank you to all of the folks who contribute/d to make our Grove what it is today. I also want to encourage everyone to continue to contribute to the healthy growth of our Grove.

We all have different abilities and circumstances that affect our manner of contributing. Some people have given of their time and energy and creativity. If you look around the Nemeton you can see many ritual items donated by our members. Other members have quietly and often anonymously placed monetary contributions in the donations box. All of these things combine to make Shining Lakes our "home."

Just like a grove of trees, our Grove is a living, growing thing. There are always things we need for rituals and other Grove events. Some things, like offerings for the Kindreds, are pretty obvious. Less obvious things are site rental fees or mundane consumables like Dixie cups (they don't grow on trees ya know—well, okay the paper ones technically do) and paper plates. Less material but still very important is time and energy. We always need help before and after ritual to set up and put away the ritual items and to run the raffle and to clean up after the potluck.

Then there is the most abstract and possibly most important thing of all: ideas. Remember, this all started as an idea that was acted upon before the first ritual fire was ever lit. This Grove is truly for the members, by the members. We want to hear everyone's ideas of how to make this Grove a warm, inviting, and meaningful place to worship the Gods.

Grove Calendar: Fall Equinox to Yule

Social Events

Coffee Hour: Join us for our monthly discussion of interesting topics. *10/24, 11/21, 12/12, 7-9 pm at Borders*

Corn Maze: Contact Rob for carpooling info, and bring your own minotaur repellent. *10/19, 2-4 pm at Bestmaze*



Meetings

SLG Business Meeting: Discussion of general business and setting of the calendar. *10/14, 11/11, 12/9, 7-9 pm at Borders*

Helping the Huron

Bug ID Day: Count the insect samples we collected from streams in the rivershed. Sponsored by the Huron River Watershed Council. (You must register in advance for this! jmartin@hrwc.org or 734-769-5971) *10/5, 12-3 pm or 2-5 pm, meet at NEW Center*

Rituals

An Bruane: Rituals and advanced spiritual exploration for those who wish to go beyond the standard High Day rites. Members only, please. *10/28, 11/18, 7-9 pm at Rod/Liz's*

Liturgists' Roundtable—Ritual Planning: Help us plan our Samhain and Yule rituals. All welcome. *10/21, 11/4, 12/2, 12/16, 7-9 pm at Rod/Liz's*

Rituals (continued)

Fire Watch: We follow the traditions of our ancestors and keep the hearth fire burning the night before ritual. We also initiate the Leadership Council for the new year. *11/7, Dusk at Botsford*

Fire Lighting Ceremony: We gather together to kindle the hearth fire and take it to our homes, to tend through the night and bring to the ritual. We will also do craft projects for the next day's ritual. *12/19, 7 pm at Rod/Liz's*

Samhain Afternoon Rite: Join us as we celebrate the reunion of our tribal father Lugh and our river goddess Ana. This ritual will feature a craft project, and is suitable for all ages. There will be a raffle and potluck after the rite. *11/8, 2-4 pm at Botsford (rain date: 11/9)*

Samhain Evening Rite: Join us as we honor the Ancestors and Mannanan, our god of the Otherworld. This ritual uses themes of death and rebirth, and may not be suitable for young children. There will be a potluck after the rite. (If you've never been to our ritual site before, *please* come early, as the driveway is very difficult to find in the dark.) *11/8, 6-9 pm at Botsford (rain date: 11/9)*

Yule Rite: Join us as we honor Danu and Bel, our primal mother and father deities. There will be a raffle and potluck after the rite. *12/20, 2-5 pm at ICC Ed Center*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
September 28	29	30	October 1	2	3	4
5 12-3 or 2-5 Bug ID Day NEW Center	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 7-9 Business Mtg. Borders	15	16	17	18 SWEETEST DAY
19 2-4 Corn Maze Bestmaze	20	21 7-9 Liturgist RT Rod/Liz's	22	23	24 7-9 Coffee Hour Borders	25
26	27	28 7-9 An Bruane Rod/Liz's	29	30	31 HALLOWEEN	November 1
2 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS ENDS	3	4 7-9 Liturgist RT Rod/Liz's	5	6	7 Fire Watch Botsford	8 Samhain Rites 2-4 Afternoon 6-9 Evening Botsford
9	10	11 7-9 An Bruane Rod/Liz's	12	13	14	15
16	17	18 7-9 Business Mtg. Borders	19	20	21 7-9 Coffee Hour Borders	22
23	24	25	26	27 THANKSGIVING	28	29
30	December 1	2 7-9 Liturgist RT Rod/Liz's	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 7-9 Business Mtg. Borders	10	11	12 7-9 Coffee Hour Borders	13
14	15	16 7-9 Liturgist RT Rod/Liz's	17	18	19 7 Fire Lighting Rod/Liz's	20 2-5 Yule Rite ICC Ed Center

Addresses:

Bestmaze Corn Maze, 3803 Noble Rd., Williamston
 Borders Books and Music: 3527 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor
 Botsford Recreational Preserve, 3015 Miller, Ann Arbor

ICC Ed Center, 1522 Hill St., Ann Arbor
 NEW Center: 1100 N. Main, Ann Arbor
 Rod and Liz's: 263 Larkspur, Ann Arbor, (734) 998-1029