



Spring Equinox Issue, Y.R. XLIX  
March 25, 2012 c.e.  
Volume 28, Issue 2

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## **Sacred Groves**

# News of the Groves

[www.rdna.info/wheretroves.html](http://www.rdna.info/wheretroves.html)

## **Tuatha DeDanann Grove: News from California**

Greetings!

Tuatha De Danann Grove held its Spring Equinox celebration in Oakland this year, It was a cozy four of us, with two members eagerly waiting for the Season of Life to arrive so they can be

officially made Server and Preceptor, respectively. A homemade brick barbecue made a fine altar with fire (this is becoming a tradition with us), and after the ceremony--which the Earth-Mother was kind enough to interrupt the rain for--we had a bodacious barbecue. Needless to say, there was much feasting and rejoicing. Both the Gods and the dogs got their fair share.

We agreed on May 6th as the proper day to do Beltane, place to be determined later.

Peace!

Jeffrey Sommer, AD, Tuatha De Danann Grove, NRDNA.

## **Alexandria Grove: News from Virginia**

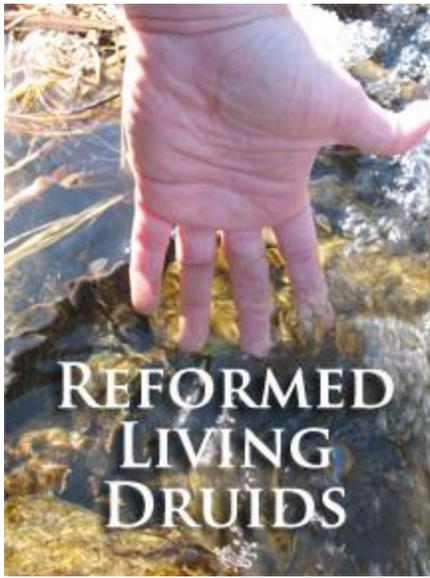
Mike here again. What an awful March it has been, with a huge work project and going to training fulltime together. I managed to squeeze out one rather long episode of Desperate Druids, but that was about it. You probably didn't hear much from me. Cherry blossoms were highly welcome, and I begin a brand new year April 2 with hope and excitement.

--Mike the Fool, AD, Alexandria Grove, RDNA [mikerdna@hotmail.com](mailto:mikerdna@hotmail.com)

## **Eureka Grove, Mother Grove RDG: News from California**

Ellis Arseneau has recovered from heart surgery and is back to his old happy ways. ☺

Thanks to everyone of you for your "air support": your prayers, spells, reiki, sacrifices, Masses and general thoughts of good will and healing. Hopefully, in a few days, after my body gets used to running on all four cylinders, and will again be able to return to full functionality.



# Reformed Living Druids Schism

Scott Schumacher has proposed a new branch of the Reform (separate from RDNA, RDG, NRDNA, etc) and it lacks any formal orders, priests, officers, mother groves, training programs, initiations. It simply follows the basic tenets. We'll see how this develops.

<http://www.reformedlivingdruids.org/>

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/202992976472352/>

**Reformed Living Druids is an idea for a New Paradigm of Druidry born out of the North American Druid Reform.** We promote and foster the "Living Druidry" of our members without the need or want for degrees, levels, ordination, archdruids, or unequal hierarchy. We foster and

support each Druid's individual path and their own experience and relationship with Nature. We are currently in the exploratory phase of birthing this organization.

Some proposed exploratory visions, inspirations, and "purpose statements" for The Reformed Living Druids currently include:

- *To FREELY CHOOSE our own teachers, learning, and Druidry practices.*
- *To actively encourage a walk on a sovereign individual path, based on a DIRECT and PERSONAL relationship with Nature.*
- *To not be judged by, limited, or bound to any arbitrary or artificial "degree" or level of "attainment" of learning.*
- *To not be bound by a political leaning of one Druid Grove or another.*
- *To affirm the notion that we are all, inherently, Priests or Clergy in our own Druid practices, and that hierarchy structures (including Archdruids), are an unnecessary and unwanted construction.*
- *To support the notion that Druidry is a Liberating process for the individual, grounded in the "here and now" of life's ebbs and flows.*
- *To encourage and actively promote the unbridled quest for sovereign discovery, adding to a more AUTHENTIC interdependent whole for all Druids.*

If you would like more information, or if you are interested in joining in this quest, you may join our email list or contact me, Scott Schumacher, directly.

scott [at] northerndruid.net



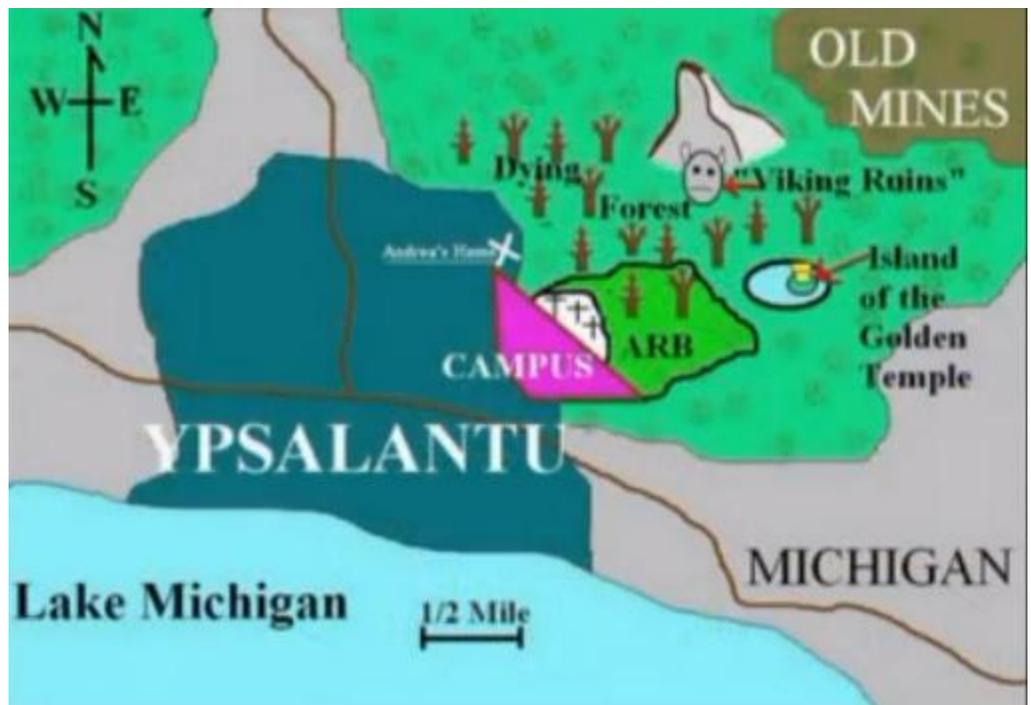
# DRUID PRODUCTIONS



Episode 11- Invitation <http://youtu.be/h66NmIiQr9k>

This was the longest episode, over 20 minutes. It begins a five episode liturgical and election arc that will wrap up Season One. A good time to jump into the series.

Matters come to a head at Andrea's trouble home. Peter's relates his narrow escape to his roommate and learns a tragic secret



about one of the Druids, and receives a mysterious invitation from another. The chaplain struggles with a dilemma, but is rescued by an unexpected gift. Sarah returns from a vacation to discover the grove is beset with chaos and hears a troubling request to put things in order.

Below is a map of the fictitious city, that might be helpful. Naturally, all the items on the map will become important at some point in the series.



# Dining with Druids

A Podcast on Religion, Politics & Other Rude Dinner Conversation

## Dining with Druids

<http://diningdruids.wordpress.com/>

We're your hosts, Ali and Jeff Lilly. We invite you to be our guest, sit down at our table, share a bite, have a glass of wine, make yourself at home... and get ready for some pretty damn rude dinner conversation. We're modern-day Druids who love to talk about religion, politics and all manner of other inappropriate subjects

sure to get the blood moving. (We think it helps with digestion.) So tuck in, and enjoy this half-assed podcast of philosophical foodies-for-thought trying to talk with their mouths full.



<http://www.northerndruid.net/northern-druid-podcast-7/>

*This is a longer podcast to make up for all the lost time!*

*Songs Include:*

*"Ode to Ireland" by Rebecca Hilton*

*"Is it for Freedom" by Sara Thomsen*

*Topics covered:*

*What I've been up to when I wasn't*

*recording podcasts*

*Moving, the loss of my Grandmother, a threatening situation, and life now owning a car*

*Should Druidry be free? Should it cost money? What is fair?*

*Pagan groups and financial strength*

*Should all Druids be 'liberal'? Are there conservative or libertarian Druids?*

*Changing Political climate*

*Looking at "lesser thought of" intuitive people, hunters, preppers, new age bias*

*Importance of Diversity and multiple paradigms in 2012.*

*Meditation on Spring and expectant energy!*

*Enjoy!!*



The druid Gwynlan's investigation into vicious murders takes him far to the lands of the ferocious Picts and across the seas to the Isle of Ailbe. Despite the distance, opponents of the Church of the Britons remain on his trail. Available for £6.99 from booksellers or directly from the publishers' website,

[www.dalenbooks.com](http://www.dalenbooks.com) .



- **La Clairière du Corbeau - The Raven's Grove 2011-2012**

Surprise!!!! Première année de la Clairière du Corbeau video – Raven's Grove 1st year anniversary video!

with Karen Cummings, Daniel Beaudoin, Lisa Corrigan, Anne Hertzelt Blackman Beeton, Lise Bellefeuille, Julie Anglehart, Rhonda Sharpe Morrison and Penny Leyson Young. <http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=10150711230440202>

Length: 18:30

## Free Druid Book

By [Nimue Brown](#)

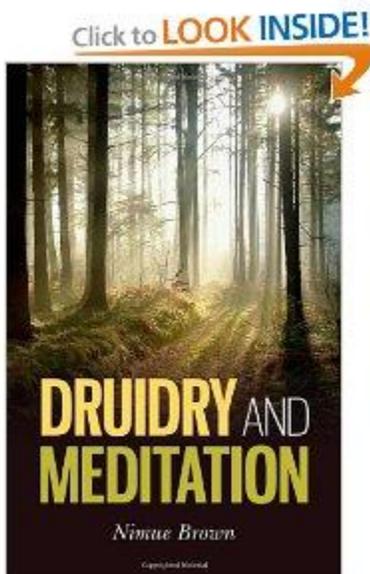
If you have a look at

<http://druidlife.wordpress.com/books/> – the page I've just added, you'll find not only a pointer towards the *Druidry and Meditation* book, but also a poetry collection, which you can download for free. One of the reasons I am giving it away, is that it's unspeakably hard to get poetry published, much less to find a paying market. This saddens me a considerable amount, but I feel the sharing is more important to me than the being paid for it. *Lost Bards and Dreamers* has a lot of history around it. It was published for a while by Alpheratz Press, which did not survive as a house, sadly. Another long story there, but it isn't mine to tell. Most of the poems were written for someone,

or for a specific occasion. There were people I was teaching about Druidry, and sharing poems seemed to be a good way of doing that. There were also lines written for my child. Some of the poems from my ogham inspired collection landed here too.

While there's some experimenting with form and structure, much of it is free verse, because I enjoy that more.

The cover was created for me by Tom Brown, my other and better half. It coincides with the transition from being working partners, to being romantically involved. The purple poppy design came first, and had been intended as a tattoo (still not had that done, maybe one day!). It's the same image that I use on this blog, and the blog header comes from this book cover too.



The Lost Bards of the title, referred to Bards of the Lost Forest, the bardic gorsedd I was heavily involved with for some years. My fellow bards there were a huge inspiration to me, and I wanted to reflect that in my work.

I'm on the credits for this one as Brynneth Nimue – another sign of transition, moving away from the associations of the old surname, but not yet at the point of knowing I would take Tom's name. We weren't even in the same country even.

I've always written poetry. As a child I churned out that kind of fluffy, lightweight, observational stuff you might expect. I moved into the teenage angst years, with poetry as therapy. Gradually I became interested in trying to write something other people might want to read. I went through exactly the same process with prose, only quicker. There is only so much time you can spend writing fiction that is based on the self, before it gets painfully dull. Poetry is the same. It has to do more than bleed and vent. It has to take the bleeding, howling and flailing, the mess, and tease it out into something.... More.

If people like this one, I may collect up material I have on my hard drive and put together a second book, again with a view to giving it away.

# DRUID WRITINGS

## Alban Eilir /Vernal Equinox

Our lady dons a new mantle of green, her consort lover, has planted his seed. The quickening now has began, as she breaths life into, her magical plan. The youth of this spring, the saplings are fully awake, heading towards the light they steadfastly do take, from seed to sapling, magic reborn, the breath of her life, the coming of dawn.

The sun warms these seeds of life as winter gives up along with it's strife. The dew drops do fall on this spring day, nourishing the ground for the saplings to play. Snow receded giving way to lady earth, her blanket she does unfold, and with it, go the days of long cold.

Balanced now, is this time on the wheel, as day and night reunite, we weigh and examine our seeds. Before we go forth to plant them in deeds. Contemplative now the seeds we do sow, nurturing life and all it bestows. Creation is but the most beautiful of deeds. The flowing spirit, the birth of a seed.

By  
Penny Young

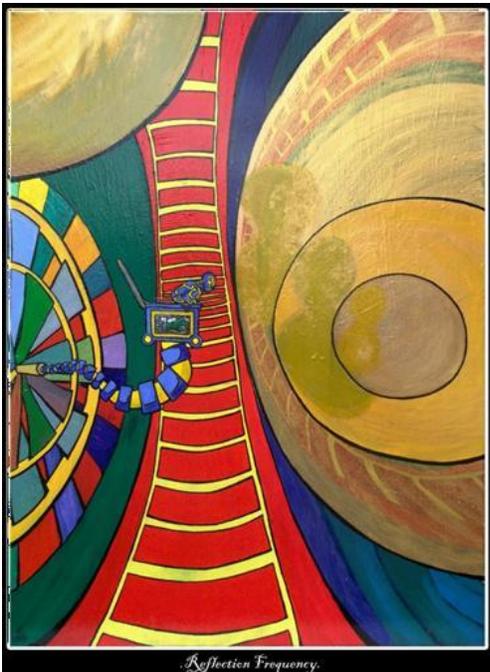
## **Druid Meanderings Patricia Norwood 2012**

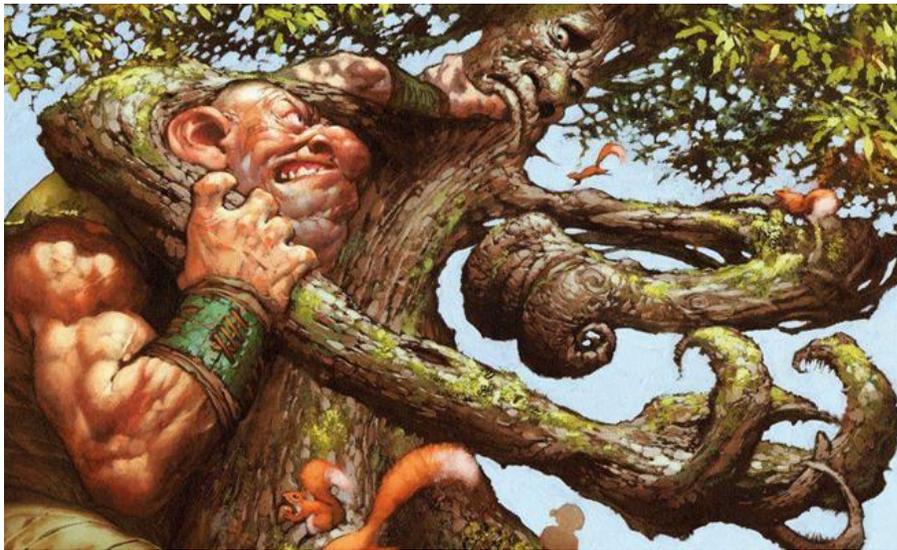
**When in the wilds I oft do wander  
And sit in awe of Nature's bounty  
... To greet the day in delight  
Listen to the whispering of the trees  
And watch the birds in migration  
The seasons turn, the soft snowfall  
Loath i am to return  
To the boxed in buildings and pollution  
Of cities and highways so busy  
I'd rather engage in wildcraft play  
To gather herbs and nuts  
Smell the flowers and the fresher air  
Of the countryside, the rivers and streams  
And dream a simple Druid dream  
Of a world lush and pristine**

# DRUID PICTURE COLLECTION

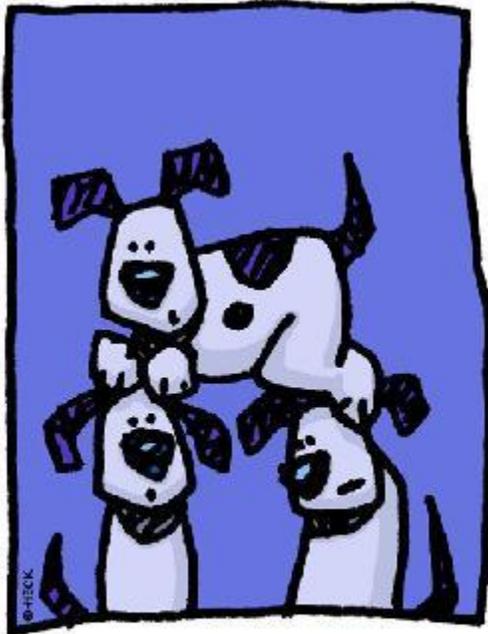


By Penny





CAD GODDEU [battle of trees]:  
The heather kept off the enemy on every side,  
And the broom was well to the front,  
But the fern was plundered,  
And the furze did not do well;  
The stout, lofty pine,  
The intruding pear-tree,  
The gloomy ash,  
The bashful chestnut-tree,  
The prosperous beech,  
The long-enduring poplar,  
The scarce plum-tree,  
The shelter-seeking privet and woodbine,  
The wild, foreign laburnum;  
The bean, bearing in its shade an army of  
phantoms;  
Rose-bush, raspberry, ivy, cherry-tree, and medlar-  
-all took their parts... — with Trena Mullins  
Pearson.



## Doghenge



If you have a iPad and love doing a finger labyrinth. This an excellent one. There's 10 to choose from and another great feature is, you can change the labyrinth's colors to suit your mood or be nice to eyes.. If you want, you can a flaming tail follow you finger too. Which is fun to to see, if you decide to see how fast you can do the labyrinth.

There's another labyrinth app call iPause but that one has a yellow background that kinda hard on the eyes most the times. Plus there's a green dot that follows your finger and it does a so/so job of doing that.

**Finger Labyrinth Hd for iPad - Download Finger Labyrinth App Reviews for iPad**

[www.topappreviews101.com](http://www.topappreviews101.com)

Top App Reviews 101.com Offers Finger Labyrinth for iPad. Get Latest User Reviews on Finger Labyrinth Hd app here. Download Latest FingerLabyrinth Hd on App Store. Finger Labyrinth for your iPad is now ready to download and share.

# REFORMED DRUIDS



What my friends think we do.



What my mom thinks we do.



What society thinks we do.



What the press thinks we do.



What other Druids think we do.



What we really do.

Photos of Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA)

Tag photo: L. Options

www.RDNA.info

# Druids



What my friends think we do.



What my mom thinks we do.



What Society thinks we do.



What the media thinks we do.



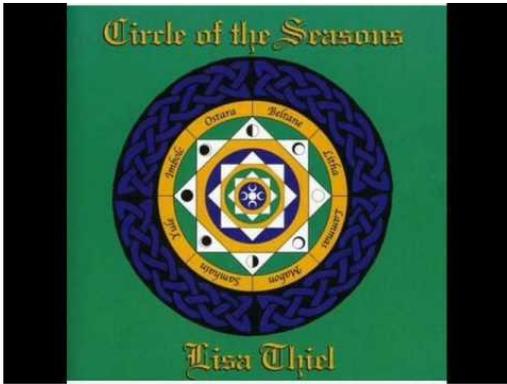
What other Pagans think we do.



What we really do.



# DRUID INSPIRED VIDEOS



**Lisa Thiel - Ostara (Spring Song)**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80mn8uDFCi8&feature=related>

Song: Ostara (Spring Song)

Artist: Lisa Thiel

Album: Circle Of The Seasons

# song: 04



**Beltane song**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CssAkpLSLY0&context=C4a48914ADvjVQa1PpcFNI-F92D2rcV1VtYmUYByIKSiqyIHsnMI0%3D>

A celebration of this wonderful and magical time of year full of the exuberance within the springtime waking songs of re-emergence, so alive and vibrant afte...



**Henry Purcell - Sing, Sing, Ye Druids**

<http://youtu.be/oV5ivF9kgmU>



**DIY treehouse inventor creates Ewok world in rural Oregon**

<http://youtu.be/K7aVLMZvNEQ>

In 1974, fresh out of the army, Michael Garnier went to rural Oregon to try to make a living off the woods. He tried making furniture, fences, pole barns and...

# FACEBOOK DRUID DEBATES



## Orders and Such Debate

Scott Schumacher

So, I'm just gathering opinions and interest here. You all know that I think that "degrees", "ordination" and other "hierarchy models" of Druidry are in my opinion "old paradigm". Just wondering who out there might share my opinion, and who out there might get excited if a new, more inclusive, degreeless, and archdruid-less "Reformed Living Druidry" umbrella organization were to spring up? (and who might help me?)

**Scott Schumacher** Examples of "Living Druidry" often come from the works of Emma Restell Orr and the organization she founded in the UK called The Druid Network.

[http://www.amazon.com/Living-Druidry-Magical-Spirituality-](http://www.amazon.com/Living-Druidry-Magical-Spirituality-Wild/dp/0749924977)

[Wild/dp/0749924977](http://www.amazon.com/Living-Druidry-Magical-Spirituality-Wild/dp/0749924977)

**Oriana** do you want dissenting opinions or just ones that agree? ;)

**Scott** I'm mostly trying to discern interest, but since I believe in free speech, feel free to express your opinion. I know that a sidestep like this could shake "the establishment" - but I want to first express GRATITUDE for everyone on whatever path they are on, and that I believe diversity is very good. Freedom of religion, speech, opinion, belief, etc. All good!

**.Dawn** My family always taught the Druidic structure was familial and local...often with bloodlines passing down rites as well as political places...but that is just what I was taught...

**George** how would they feel about "Natural Witch / Druid reincarnated and Un Reformed Druids" ?

**Scott** George, I am thinking that as a "network" umbrella organization that values a solitary practitioner and respects each individual as a sovereign being with their own approach to Druidry and their own personal experience with Nature, there should be no problem. I'm envisioning a network umbrella to be a resource for connecting solitary Druids and like-minded groves or protogroves uninterested in the hierarchy. A true resource for vast and unbridled learning, sharing, and support and the freedom to learn, grow, and express individual and personal definitions of their own "Living Druidry".

**.Rusty Mon** The deal is, that no one group has everything, for everyone, no matter the subject. Now, you are also talking about "Neo-Druidry" in a "Neo-Pagan" framework...the Umbrella would be History...it gives many different, and differing groups room to exist.

**.Dawn** Oooooooooohhhhhhhh you have no idea how long I have wanted to find a network such as that.

**.George** The Druid path I am part of could be interested in helping. (Craeftgemot Witancoveyne (A Druid Church and School in America).

**.Scott** Rusty Mon, I believe that your interpretation of Neo-Druidry and Neo-Pagan and it's link to history could be one valid path. There are Druids who may consider themselves a mix of Pagan, Wiccan, Christian, or for me "Universalists". We can look back and honor traditions of the past while also

building a structure to connect many diverse paradigms as we look to either the future of Druidry, or even bringing Druidry into the mainstream perhaps.

**.George** Count Me and Craeftgemot we will help on both sides of the veils as we can.

**.Scott** George, send me a pvt message and I'll add you to an email list I'm starting!

**.Scott** One of the other things I've thought of is that the umbrella organization, through memberships of individuals and allied Druid groups, along with other fundraising efforts, could create a foundation or "rolling scholarship" program for individuals or groups with a similar mission who wish to gather funding for specific projects, etc.

**Rusty Mon** Or you could just join "Druids of Anarchy" group, and see how that works...any Group needs a system. That system does not have to be fair, and one other thing, is that of everyone who wants to "work magic", most will fail. Many who fail, pretend they succeeded.

**Dawn** I enjoy solo simply because of that reasoning...I do not wish to be abrasive, but it smacks of organized religion to demand some sort of hierarchy structure in order to learn...knowledge should be available to those who truly seek...

**.Scott** I'm more of an optimist, Rusty Mon. Of course there would be a structural framework, but that framework would be more one of protecting an individual's sovereign right to their own unique experience and learning of Druidry, without degrees or archdruid hierarchy. It would be democratic in structure as well, while honoring the sovereignty of learning, study, ceremony, and practice.

**Rusty Mon** I have a Tradition, and Druid is part of that Tradition. Ancient Druids were known to have had a Conclave every 3 years, and it was more than a group of "Wizards". Those Folk were the Keepers of a Culture. Now-a-days, something is certainly needed to bring Folks together.

**.Scott** I definitely think that something is needed to both unite Druidry, and also to honor the sovereignty of experience. I do have a question. How do you define Druid vs. Wizard? Is that only YOUR definition or is it universally accepted? In the Reform (not Ancient Druids, mind you - the Reform sprung up apart from Ancient Tradition I believe) - who is empowered or should be empowered to make those definitions and distinctions, and on what criteria?

**Stacey** @Dawn, where have you read that the RDNA demands some sort of hierarchy structure in order to learn? All the material is free and accessible to anyone.

**Dawn** Oh I wasn't commenting on the RDNA specifically. I was stating I have avoided most groups as there have been either demands of payments, or there have been requirements to be "levelled" somehow in training in order to be recognized. Being taught as a family bloodline Druid I have been a solo practitioner most of my life due to that...I was commenting on teh remark made regarding hwo there muyst be some hierarchy structure in order to succeed...

**.Stacey** I think Rusty said there needs to be a system to succeed, not a hierarchy. Those are different.

**.Sébastien** Scott, I suggest that you create your own facebook page. This is a RDNA group :-)

**.Dawn** I do not see the difference...I am sorry but I do not...

**Scott** Ahh.. figured it would only take about an hour or two before i'd be told to "go away" because of differing opinions. hehe.. But I do consider myself part of the RDNA, and I'm just asking about "interest" in a concept.

**Stacey** A system would be like: we meet every High Day for ritual, we have a potluck following the ritual. Once a month we have a study group. We meet at the new and full moons, we have an email list/fb page where we share ideas. At our ritual we honor a different deity according to X. That is a system.

**Dawn** Soooo...there would no longer be practicing solo druids then..in essence

**Stacey** Why not?

**Dawn** A group environment requiring group ritual and group honoring of a deity chosen by a unit ...what is the isolated path there? I do not have a problem with getting together as a group and intermingling, however my rituals are solo and private for a reason...does that not make sense?

**Dawn** I meant to say Scott I see what you are attempting to accomplish.. LOL....if you do not mind please add me to your list...

**Stacey** I only gave you one example of a system. I didn't say it was mandatory. Do you have a system for a solo practitioner?

**Dawn** Actually the closest thing to a system I have is the seasonal requirements for rituals.

**Rusty Mon** And, probably everyone here would help out, Scott. There is a bit of accumulated information in all these noggins...make a page, or a group invite some folks, see what happens! I have some interesting stuff. And "Wizard" is more of a Continental idea...

**Penny** , i think , you have many ideas, that you would like to put in action, i say go ahead, start your own page, as for me well RDNA, because it's less structured than most groups, has great appeal, in the fact, that i can still find my own personal way, within RDNA, i am also with OBOD, which has more structure, but my choice of grove is RDNA, it has the scope for all that choose to walk this path, i think you feel different, so you should go with what you feel is right for you :-)

**Scott** Ok.. I'll make a page/group and get back to folks! :)

**Sébastien** Good idea!

**Sean MacDhai** Im with you Scott. I feel that we are each teachers \*and\* students, and we learn best when we stand eye to eye and side by side.

**George** Sounds like more of a "Meeting of the Tribes" where each bring their own "Special Ways and Magick" with a tribe of one or many. There by allow a good cross pollination of our Magick DNA if we wish.

**Thomas** There is room in the Reform for more than just one model of organization to be explored. While i'm leery of absolute equality without qualification, it will be interesting to see where such a group being developed would lead in a few decades.

**John** Scott , there is (was?) an Egalitarian RDNA grove out of Kentucky by the name of Amon Sul Grove which described itself as a "non ordered" grove, and their activities included

"Egalitarian, eclectic  
Raising food & eating  
Making beer & drinking"

I found that on the Grove Locations page of rdna.info. Sadly, they haven't checked in since about 2008, but it seems they shared a similar view on this topic. I just tried emailing the grove contact, but the email listed on rdna.info failed delivery.

**.Tully** Id' love to see it work, but from what I've seen of this type of group before...getting Druids to come to any kind of consensus to manage a group this way is akin to herding cats while blindfolded and on a pogo stick after downing a bottle of "the waters"

**.George** Tails be Dammed ?

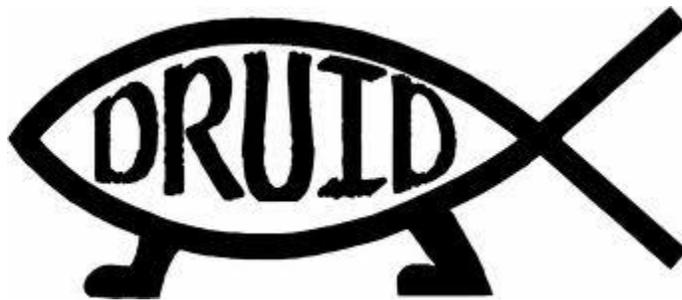
**.Scott** And so we begin moving down the path.  
<http://www.facebook.com/groups/202992976472352/>

**.Helgaleena** [https://www.facebook.com/groups/171894052868646/Druids ..](https://www.facebook.com/groups/171894052868646/Druids..)

**Rusty Mon** Hey! Now I'll have to put some "content" in there...

**Dyddgu Rhys** I like this idea Scott, will be interesting where this leads.

**.Rua Lupa** I kind of did that with my off-shoot Ehoah. It is kind of merit based where once you are living according to the tenets then you are Ehoan - Living in Complete Harmony within Nature. But thats Ehoah. I don't know how you could do it for RDNA, am greatly interested though. Do you want merit based where you have something physical to show for it? Or more scholarly based where your knowledge can easily answer a series of questions or solve certain scenarios?



## FISH AND SACRIFICE DEBATE

**Blake** I went for a walk yesterday with my girlfriend and we worshiped mother earth, the way that we do this is we dug a hole sacrificed a fish in it covered the hole back, made a small fire

over it for fertility, poured life's precious water over the fire to extinguish it and planted our favorite flower there:) this is a nice and productive way to worship i hope others start to do this as well

**Stacey** Did you ask the fish's permission first and did you thank it for giving up its life?

**.Blake** Of course. maybe i should've been more detailed. but we actually asked it if it would trade its animal form for a plant form. we also take this plants well being as our responsibility so as not to unbalance the balance of nature because the flower is not native to our region.

**Dana** Umm- ritual sacrifice of living animals is not a part of the practice of my druid traditions. (Or that of any of my druid friends.) If this feels like a part of your path, consider looking into training with a tradition where animal sacrifice has a central role and real rules - say like santeria or voodoo.

**.Jeffrey** Personally I have no problem with sacrificial worship, as long as you ask permission and thank the animal whole heartedly. If you don't, that's some baaad juju coming back on your head so just beware. Personally before I ask a plants permission to take a clipping (usually with my Rosemary tree) I cut my lip and add blood as an offering.

**Bill** "15. No Bad Stuff Well, we've succeeded, so far, at least. Like the vast majority of Neo-Pagans; we don't do blood/animal/human sacrifice (although we occasionally offer a carrot or zucchini) because we are gReformedh and we think that's yucky. We are however divided on whether fungi should be ritualistically categorized as animal or plant because they do possess biological characteristics of both."  
--- From the Reformed Druid Homepage Q&A, In case you are interested in Reformed Druidry, Sacrifice of life can be a plant but you can do wat you want though, just a little info. = )

**.Blake** It was a fish from the pond outside my house, its life had already been extinguished. i merely kept natures cycle and used the dead to fuel the living. i hope when the life is gone from my body someone will perform this same ritual. plant me under a great magnolia. and the sacrifice of live animals would be wrong, because if they're alive they wouldn't be too thrilled about changing from fish to flower. o yea and santaria just didn't work for me. too much god worship

**.Bill** I'm alright with my ashes being flushed down the toilet, when that time comes I'll probably care less about it than I do now. My wife refuses to comply with my wishes though, she says she's going to "deposit" my remains in a special place in a pine forrest by a river. I tell her the toilet will be more convenient and save gas money. = )

**Rusty Mon** "Sacrifice" means to "Make something Sacred" and does not imply killing something, however, Omnivores tend to kill things before eating them, and I have killed my fair share of Fish...the idea of killing something FOR Deity, is ridiculous, but offering the Spirit of Life is certainly not. The "Rules" of Druidry, are personal, "Neo-Druidry" however, is a different sort of Duck...

**Tully** One of the practices the wife and I have followed over the years is taking the "juices" from store packaged meat (steaks, roasts, etc) and giving those back to the earth (usually in the garden). Seeing as most of us are so detached from the food gathering cycle these days, we thought it would be at least an acknowledgement to the old days and the old ways when all parts of the animal were used and the blood was usually used to fertilize the crops.

**.Blake** I like the sandwich meat juice idea. hope u dont mind if i adopt it.

**.Stephen** Not to be a dick, but none of that ritual makes any sense in terms of natural systems... Fire for example... Not exactly fertility oriented...

Worship is also a modern invention, just stand in awe of creation and respect it... That's all the universe asks of any of us...

And if we have any questions to not hesitate to ask IT...

All that which, is and has ever been...

Again, not to be a dick...

**.Rua Lupa** I realize in this circumstance the fish's life was "already snuffed out", but since the subject of "Thanking them for their life" and sacrifice has come up, I'll put in my two cents on that.

So, how would you feel if some alien ship scooped you up and killed you, and after you were dead they verbally thanked you? This would be no different than us doing the same - plant or animal. Is thanking it somehow disingenuous because your words don't seem to match the act of violence toward it for no other reason that ceremony?

**.Sébastien** RDNA and Druidry does not promote any type of blood sacrifice. Indeed plant offerings are done in RDNA rituals like flowers, branches, seeds, fruits and cereals. But we do not intentionally kill the entire plant. It is like taking an apple from the tree... it does not kill it.

Are you new to Druidry or to RDNA? If so.. I suggest that you visit our webpage and read on us... to find out more about or customs and traditions. :-)

**.Stephen** My gf recently introduced me to the concept of only eating what the plant drops... Quite by accident... Gotta say it is all tasty...

**.Rua** Any fruit bearing plant intends for its fruit to be eaten for seed dispersion, so picking a ripe fruit to eat is exactly what the plant intends (just spit out the seeds for planting afterwards, because most of us don't leave our fecal matter on the soil these days anymore)

**Penny** I'm having a hard time grasping the concept of this, but alas it won't be the first time i didn't understand :-)

**.Helgaleena** Fish for fertilizer is a very long-standing Native American practice. I would do such as this if I needed to hold a funeral for a pet fish, for example. My in-laws in Wisconsin grew maize and squash and netted small fish in the spring at spawning time just for this use.

**.Blake** And fire enhances the nitrogen levels in the soil even further, the water is just to help incubate, germinate would be a better word but im not sure on the spelling, so incubate the seed, it all actually does make sense in a natural aspect and in ritual form, but it does seem to conflict with RDNA guidelines just a bit because of the animal it uses. this ritual could be done with a fish substitute, such as a fresh compost that will decay underground to produce nitrogen.

**Helgaleena** If you are not doing the Order of Worship there is no conflict at all.

**.Stacey** Um, no. It has nothing to do with the Order of Common Worship. It has to do with whether you call yourself a Reformed Druid. In the Druid Chronicles, *The Early Chronicles, Chapter the Fifth*, there was discussion on whether to make an animal or bird sacrifice. *"And it came to pass that Howard, who was Preceptor, did arise and he spake unto them saying: 'Have ye not forgotten that we are reformed, yea, even do we call ourselves by the name of Reformed, wherefore we must put behind us those things which do bring offense to our senses.'"*

**Sébastien** <----- A Reformed Druid of the 3rd Order and against all notions concerning any type of blood sacrifice.... This is sooooo not RDNA, nor is it ADF and OBOD!!!! Well said Stacey!

**.Sébastien** The topic has nothing to do with fish-waste composting... we cannot go on about this like it's a big joke. RDNA is also part of the international druidic community and has been jointly denouncing any type of blood sacrifices with other well known druidic organisations. So much hard work has been put into denouncing it. I'm totally open to any type of educated discussions but will not let RDNA and my own reputation as a as druid on the line here. As admin to this group, I will have to delete this entire posting if we do not respect the values and ethics of RDNA. If you do not share our principles, this group might not be for you!

**.Bill** We're not Wicans. = )

**.Sébastien** I believe even the wiccans do not do it either! lol

**.Stacey** Please don't delete this posting Brother Sebastien. It's been a wonderful discussion and hairpull. It's been good to talk about and clarify the position of the RDNA in the context of sacrifice, offerings, reciprocation to the deities. It's given a lot of us much to ponder.

**.John** Lest we not forget, from an Animist's perspective, plants have spirits, and one hypothesis among many proposes that plants can feel pain. There are current legitimate ongoing studies as to plant-plant communication, especially when one plant becomes damaged.

With that in mind, to an Animist it might not matter if the sacrifice is of plant or animal. Both would feel pain. Plus, some plants that are used for food can still be considered alive when they are eaten.

Now that just threatens a vegans way of life, doesn't it? One of the pagan podcasts I listen to, "Inciting a BrewHaHa," is co-hosted by 'Velma Nightshade.' I'm hoping I paraphrase this correctly, but she can sense a fresh tomato screaming in pain when she slices into it with her knife. They cover this topic in depth, and unfortunately, the show notes aren't very specific, so you'd have to listen to every episode to find the one with this discussion.

**Stephen** Somehow my most recent comment got deleted..

C'est la vie...

/Going to do something in the real world...

**.Sébastien** Sister Stacey... I will permit on your request. Peace!

**Stephen** And John that isn't a hypothesis...

Plants CAN feel pain, plants CAN read your thoughts, right down to image based Thought Forms, and Plants ARE currently tuned into a communication frequency coming from SPACE...

Please see the following for more:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8kO5AF-lj4>

**.Bill** Yes, I agree with Stacey, if it can help someone or clarify things it's good.

**.Stephen** And this is one of the reasons I only eat nuts, dropped fruit or 'that which the plant offers'... And meat... Because meat creatures can defend themselves...

**Jeffrey** I mispoke earlier in my post. Re reading it sounded like I killed animals for ritual and believe me that is not the case! Before I was vegetarian I would give my left over meat to racoons in my backyard, as a kind of way to not waste food and to give back to nature. (although the coons still come by and they get into our trash cans now, >\_> ) But I agree with Sébastien , this is not a topic well suited for the RDNA.

**Jeffrey** And now that I read the comments that were posted while i was writing that, I agree with Stacy. It is good to get other peoples perspectives, especially coming from this topic.

When my mother first learned I was Druid, she thought I was doing animal sacrifices and was dead against it, and she's a wiccan.

Point being, even amongst the Neo-Pagan community, there is much haziness in between sects and groups. We shouldn't keep ourselves from listening to how others view their spirituality. Were I the fish, I would have preferred being buried with such ceremony than to be a side dish or flushed down a toilet (no offense Bill). And while we're quoting the ARDA:

*6. Beware those men who say: "Follow my way, for mine is the way unto Be'al, and there is no other way."*

*7. Their numbers are great and their voices are loud. They shall present you much authority before you, and say: "We know our way to the only way, for it is the way of our fathers."*

*8. But take heed, lest you should fall into the trap.*

*9. For awareness shall come unto no one save it shall be in their own way; and it shall come unto no one save they shall come unto it.*

**.Stephen** We really need to get Caesars version of Druids off the history books...

**.Stephen** And Jeffrey: That was some good timing on the quote posting there... =P

**.Stacey** I disagree Brother Jeffrey. It might not be a practice well suited for the RDNA but it is a topic well worth discussing. Thus sayeth the other Third Order on the group tonight.

**.Stacey** As far as I know the only groups doing ritual sacrifice are those in the Yoruba tradition and in the African Diaspora. Those animals are eaten afterwards too, so parts don't go to waste.

**Jeffrey** Uhm, I agree?

**Penny** All that being said, i must admit it isn't for me, i consider, all life as precious and sacred, and have struggled for quite some time now, with these thoughts :-)

**.Helgaleena** I still maintain that if the fish is already dead, and the ritual you are doing is not an RDNA ritual but one you have devised privately, there should be no conflict. If all our activities outside of performing the RDNA Order of Worship were regulated by the Order of Worship's internal strictures, we would be Jains eating only what fell freely off the trees. But no, plenty of RDNA Archdruids continue to eat animals. And also cut plants with pointy tools.

**Penny** Helga whilst, i hear and understand, where you are going with this. I don't automatically believe, that all people who buy and consume meat, are totally sensitive to the reality, that they are eating the dead flesh of an animal, do the majority of people when they pick up a steak from the grocery store, think of the animal, that i came from, how that animal was killed. I think not, because if they did start to think along those lines then indeed, we might all be vegetarians or vegans. I have lived on a farm, i know the reality, and have seen it many times, this is why i find it very distasteful, and i struggle with this, however, I do eat meat, in limited quantities, when my body needs the protein, that other proteins i have tried, do not sustain me. Most people, don't are either ignorant or are disconnected from this reality, and for plants, does not everyone, ask permissions and give thanks, with the full understanding of what they are doing. I think that this a prime example, of why it is so important, to be selective with what we read, and absorb, and also to pay great attention to our feelings, not to mention, what this says about Druidry in the publics eyes, isn't this what most of us have strived to maintain, is a huge misconception, about this path ? I apologize to one and all if my comment offends, never the less, as this is open for discussion, i feel quite, sickened, when i feel all life is precious and sacred, even if there is some grey matter, as Helga has quite rightly pointed out.

**.Bill** @Penny (and anyone else intrested)~ no need to apologize (at least not to me), I'd like to say also, with no apology that I (unlike almost everyone else here it seems) hold no real sence of "precious sacredness" as far as life/living things go. I believe that life and death are things of nature and nature is natural. The passing of a fish or tree or human, even an eco-system are all parts of nature and you may be personally saddened or feel loss, but it is nature and therefore natural that everything that's here now will someday be gone. My sence of Druidism might be more akin to embracing growth and evolution that trying to maintain a grip on things of the past.

**.Helgaleena** Compost is a part of the Great Cycle that could use a little more respect imo.

**Penny** Of course Helga, that goes without saying, but then this pertains to life as well :-)

**Helgaleena** Vegans eat dead beings too, the plants. Plants have consciousness also. Why make a distinction between one sort of dead and another? It is in the Order of Worship where we are most mindful, and it will have an eventual effect upon our daily living too.

**.Penny** My point was Helga if not clear, that all life forms are sacred, as is compost, as it sustains and starts the cycle again. What ever peoples personal opinion is on this, i will never be comfortable, with this please, or offend or otherwise. I respect your understanding of this, and hope that you can respect mine :-)

**Jeffrey** Bill, I agree in part with what you have said. Yes, it is a natural cycle and cannot be stopped, but why not attempt to change it? Even if the forrests are dying, why not try to help them by planting more or trying to stop deforestation (this is but one example). I'm not sure if you intended it to sound as such, but from your post it sounds like you have the \*It's gonna happen anyway, why should I give a frak?\*" view. When I first started on my path in Buddhism (I'm still a buddhist by the by, just incorporated a little druidry ;) ) I had this same perspective and my thought was "well, the animals already dead, why not eat it? \*nom nom\*". But after a while I started to adopt the viewpoint Penny has. I wouldn't be able to eat a steak without seeing a cow, and that little druids is how I saved christmas.....I mean became a vegetarian.

**.Tully** There is a VERY important fact that is being overlooked here. According to the Druid Chronicles of the RDNA..." but this is one way, yea, one way among many." Yes, I do consider myself RDNA, but I also have my own personal practices. To the best of my knowledge, there certainly is no need for the two to be exclusive of the other. What I posted about my personal practices apparently offended some. I will not apologize for my personal practices, but I will state that I will refrain from sharing any more of them.

**Stacey** True dat, but not offering an animal or bird sacrifice is what defines us as "Reformed." It's a dilemma. Does mean we would not be able to participate in a West African ritual where an animal was offered?

**.Penny** Tully and indeed everyone participating here in the comment, i am not offended, because we all have our own personal paths and beliefs, i was just stating that i struggle with it and it isn't for me :-)

**.Tully** Stacey and all; I agree that it is one of the things that defines us as RDNA. I separate my practices. If I'm performing a Rite in the RDNA style, I don't use AODA material for it, and vice-versa of course. As well with my personal practices, there are those that do not gel with either RDNA or AODA, and I do not combine them. Penny Leyson Young, no harm no foul, for sure. In no way did I intend to offend, nor attempt to foist my own practices on another. Just as there are those here who are vegan and/or vegetarian, yet I am a tried and true card carrying omnivore, and I'd certainly not offer to grill a porterhouse for them! LOL! ..." but this is one way, yea, one way among many"...to each their own, what feels right for me is not necessarily for another.

**Penny** Well said Tully :-)

**Helgaleena** There came a point where I began to be haunted by the weeds I pulled when gardening. I have had to learn how to deal with the necessity of taking life, day to day, in an honest and respectful manner. Using bleach in the laundry or house-cleaning too. It reconciled me with the eating of animal products again, when I had begun to experience deficiencies from being vegetarian. OP did a personal ritual, not an RDNA ritual, and described it here. I also must acknowledge that my first steps upon the path to greater sensitivity were helped greatly by deep pondering upon the Order of Worship. So many of us have other faith practices as well. Nature is good.

**.Penny** Helga i'm so glad you shared because, these are struggles i sometimes face. I run a cleaning company, and i often have to, deal with requirements of the clients, which often don't, agree with me. Thanks :-)

**Blake** So it would seem im not a 'reformed' druid. thank you all for your time and discussion:) may your paths lead you to your own personal salvation and thank you all for your clarification. peace.

**.Rusty Mon** Very few people are, Blake...but the consensus in this thread seems to point to "not allowing" Sacrifice in an RDNA Ritual, and that is all well and good, as I have never seen one of them there things...even in our proto-grove, as no wandering 3rd has dropped on by to oversee events...

**Tully** Rusty Mon, Blake , and all; According to the ARDA Part 3, page 96, the RDNA Liturgy is "not fixed in its final form", "isn't Sacrosanct", and "may even be antithetical". IMHO anyone who "tears down another's altar" is an "anti-Druid"...in other words, if they cannot respect the different practices and beliefs of others, well...(general comment, not focused at any particular individual, FYI)

**.Tully** One last hae-penny's worth before I leave this hairpull...As Blake stated, the fish in question that started this entire debate was already dead, his actions in this were done in reverence for both the fish and The Mother, and what he did was not an RDNA Liturgical Rite. As to what I posted, it's merely a personal practice of my giving some of what I receive to nourish myself and my family back to The Mother (if even in a token bit). Plus, there seems to be a lot of taking things too seriously about all this.

**.Bill** Jeffrey I never said I don't give a f@#K, I said I embrace change, because change is natural, so what it might sound like isn't what it actually is like.. That doesn't mean that if I saw potential or unnecessary destruction that I wouldn't most likley try to right the problem, and it doesn't mean I wouldn't help a hurt animal if it was within my means. We each can only go the way our nature and inclination leads us. I'm not of a temperament to be bothered much by looking a cow in the eye and then tackling it and taking a bite...you can look away if you want, I'll share it with the wolves and you can have a salad with the rabbits, we can still be friends as far as I'm concerned. = )

**.Stephen** lolol There is only one TRUTH... And it has nothing to do with how you cut your bread...

**Morgan** Tully , or anyone else familiar with it, what is AODA? Is there a weblink?

**.John** "Ancient Order of Druids in America" <http://www.aoda.org/> probably the first druidic organization in AmericaAODA.org - Welcome [www.aoda.org](http://www.aoda.org)

Founded in 1912 as the American branch of the Ancient and Archaeological ... Order of Druids, AODA is a traditional Druid order rooted in the Druid Revival of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, offering an opportunity for modern people to experience the teachings and practices of Druidr...See more..28 February at 15:03 via Mobile · LikeUnlike · 2 · .Morgan J. Hennessy Oh yes! I had forgotten about them. Thanks for the info!

**.Finneagas** AODA established in America in 1912...

**Tully** As you will find on the Grand Grove Bios page on the link John provided, I'm a member of the AODA Grand Grove

**.Morgan** I think I might have joined them 10 years ago, but never heard much from them and eventually forgot about them... Wonder if I'm still a member.

**.Tully** If it was 10 years ago, things have changed greatly within the AODA, you should send an e-mail to the addy on the contact page and check out the website to see what things are like now. If John Michael Greer has you on the old member rosters, you're most likely still a member.



## FUNERALS DEBATE

**Helgaleena** The recent hairpull over the dead fish got me a-wondering- what do various RDNA Groves do re: funerals?

I have held funerals in my Grove, but they were only memorial remembrances in the case of humans, and the corpse was not handled at all, or even present. Nobody got throttled or burned alive or drained into a cauldron or tossed in a bog.

For non-human members of the Grove whose lifespans were short, I have held burials as well as cremations. In every case the deceased was not a sacrifice, but a congregation member deceased.

Anyone else?

**Lori** Sounds good, all of it. One thing that impressed me with RDNA is that there is no dogma. Quite frankly, I'm leaving my body to a body farm (to train police officers) and requesting that if folks decide to hold a memorial that it be open to everyone regardless of religious faith. (Although I may end up in a bog at the body farm! LOL ;) )

**.Penny** That's a really good point you make Helga, i have attended a grove funeral yet :-)

**.Jefrey** Lori , what's a body farm? And Helgaleena I would say that were I to die, I wouldn't want any formal funeral. I want to be burned on a pyre and scattered somewhere, not sure where yet tho.

**.Lori** A body farm is a place where they take dead bodies and expose them to different conditions (water, burial, hanging, etc) so that police in training can learn how to estimate how long a body's been dead. They also train CSI's.

**.Jefrey** Ahh a noble death, used to teach :)

**.Lori** I prefer to think of it as 'speaking from the grave,' but yeah. :)

**.Helgaleena** I want to be a med school cadaver. Jeffrey, who is going to do the burning? Public crematoria for the indigent are available if you truly don't care about ceremony. If you want your ash disposed of in a certain way you will need to arrange for this.

**.Sébastien** Ok... there is a whole section and tones of writings on RDNA funerals, some can be found in the Liturgy of the Druids and others in the Green Books, some other material is not attended to the public. I cannot even tell you because I'm under oath! But, I suggest doing a lot of RDNA reading. It would be too much of a task to be teaching this on facebook to some of you. This is why, it is recommended that you seek and ask a third order druid. Only a third order druid can teach the ropes to all newbie's. That is why it is important to seek the advice of an official and recognized ordained Druid then listening to the interpretations of non RDNA members.

**.Sébastien** I'm not the only third order in this group... many are silent and just watching and reading every word we post.... they are watching me at this moment.... they are watching you... they are watching all of us....Mouaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!

**Lori** ... waiting for the 'psych' ! any minute now ... "No established dogma," "No established ritual," "No strong priesthood" and "Two basic tenets: Nature is good, and likewise, nature is good" are all reasons I was drawn to RDNA! :D

**.Sébastien** Indeed... but yet not everything is said only when you are ready... I did not tell you that...shhhhhhhhh!

**Jefrey** uhm...lol? Helgaleena, I'm mainly talking about a formal ceremony with someone residing over my burial who knows nothing about me. I want to be burned on a hill somewhere, and allow the winds to take me. But really I just want close friends and family, no real clergy unless I know them. I'm confusing myself now so if I sound odd then just ignore me u\_u

**.Lori** I get you, Jeffrey ... :)

**.Mike TheFool** Being priestly is 90% what they think you know. -paraphrase of Marilyn Monroe. The rdna priests have a rather strong habit of self deprecation

**.Helgaleena** Truly, as a 3rd Order I do follow the prescribed funeral in the Order of Worship to some extent, but as I found when attending a Carleton gathering some years back, even the Order of Worship is celebrated quite differently by others as the decades pass. That is why I am curious about variation. If only non- 3rd Orders respond, so be it.

**.Thomas** I've had to do two. One was a wake and the other a memorial circle.

**.Sébastien** oh... touché! lol

**.Sébastien** Thomas that must have been an incredible experience. Grove members?

**.Stacey** I've done one. The family picked a grove area in a cemetery. They wanted a druid service for her and asked me.

**.Mike TheFool** Avoid funerals and dying when possible



## FORMALISM DEBATE

sorry if this question has been asked before, but is RDNA presenting a more formal membership structure now than it has in the past?

**Sébastien** Forrest, more you move into the structure of RDNA, you will find that it has always been there :-)

**.Thomas** It kind of depends on how you define formal.

**.Tully** To the best of my knowledge, formality of this sort is up to the individual grove.

**Mike TheFool** Some groves or people the structure is upfront others hardly visible or even in nonuse Some eras it was hardly ever listed but with more Internet outreach and shopping versus random encounters filling groves, most people want to know the basic layout --so it is trotted out in FAQ and webpages more than in the past. People weight structure and message about equally in their comparison shopping, so might as well choose early on if options are available. Oddly enough it is the people element which is more important than either. But few groves make the effort of posting bio snapshots that illustrate the true dynamic and flavor of a grove, gotta attend/interact to find that out.

**.Sébastien** I do not want to offend people but RDNA can be more than facebook or internet philosophical entertainment, there is actually real people and groves out there! RDNA promotes the creation of Groves :-)

**Thomas** Both the RDNA and her various offshoots are quite vibrant. Very active. Anything but a internet -only group. We are community and environmentally active, using both traditional and contemporary means to organize and interact. We don't fit anyone's expectations of what our hierarchy and membership should be except our own.

**.Sean MacDhai** fantastic, considering how the whole thing began. I love RDNA =]

**Thomas** I think that the Ancient Druids would very much appreciate how the Reform began. From my understanding of how they confronted the Roman onslaught and how the Welsh Druids used the faith to undergird their separate identity, Reform Druidism is very much cut from the same cloth.

**.Tully** From my experience and observation over the past few years, internet-only Druid Groups just don't last. I see the successful groups (major players-RDNA and offshoots, OBOD, AODA, etc, and many smaller groups) using the internet as it should be, a communications tool and information resource. I've seen others base their groups solely or majorly online, and fail miserably. "Virtual" Druidry IMHO is a waste.

**Helgaleena** We are the same Druids, but the Internet has given us More formal structure than we had in the past IMO, simply because we are more in contact than we were decades ago. And it's mainly Mike and Stacey's fault, too. The schisms were happening before the Internet, but now we are able to remain on better terms with the schismatic 'flavors'.

**Stacey** And a good fault it is!

**Scott** There are some subtle formalities, in my opinion if you dig into things. Some of the traditions, which are wonderful to study and help us understand a rich heritage, I think linger a bit too much, personally. Some groves and Druids follow traditions to the letter, and some toss them to the wind, and you have varying shades of gray between. The formality I'd like to see more of is one of "every member receives an equal voice" kind of democracy, because in some Druidry organizations, you pay a membership fee, only to realize that one grove of three active members is actually setting the table for everyone (everyone who pays a membership). And also this thing about "degrees" and "presiding Archdruids" and only 'clergy' (third degree folk) leading ritual, along with a lineage from a grove or Archdruid - well, I find these practices very "old paradigm" (and I'm being nice when I say that).

**.Thomas** In the RDNA I do not believe you will find lack of democratic voice. You will also be hard pressed to find a membership fee. There is deference given to the Third Order in consecration of the Waters Of Life, but that's about it. I'd suggest looking at Mike's website. While lengthy the files in ARDA 2 are well worth reading.

**.Thomas** I know that in my group, which seems to have begun as a grandchild group of the RDNA, the local groves can vote to undo something that the local AD does if they disagree enough. They can

even remove an AD in a vote of no confidence. Rituals are corporate activity, and parts of it are divided out so that everyone can play a part at every rite. There are no membership fees.

**.Sébastien** In a grove like in any kind of association you need some kind of structure and RDNA offers one that is much more flexible than other druidic groups. Indeed there are degrees to attain and that is how we work. If you read between the lines, RDNA is a fraternity at its core. This is why there is a great respect amongst third degree druids. When you reach the third order, you also have grown out of the first and second order. This means that you are ready to teach RDNA druidry and able to hold up to the responsibility of holding a RDNA grove and capable of keeping up RDNA traditions. Much like any other Druid Orders or groups.

**.Sébastien** When I started, about 10 years ago, RDNA was not that popular compared to other druidic groups; it was seen as a group of want-to-be's, I remember getting the cold shoulders from other Druidic groups because I was RDNA. It was accused of not having any serious structure and not holding any valued druidic traditions. But today, RDNA has grown to be respected and now recognized as being one of the major druidic groups in North-America and source of many other druidic groups. In fact, there is still much of RDNA stuff found in ADF rituals, much merit to both Isaac Bonewits :-)

Today OBOD, ADF and many other druidic groups have created personal links with many of us. Do to the persistence of Mike, Stacey and many other Druids that have helped make RDNA a well respected druidic organisation on the international level.

**.Thomas** It's important to remember that RDNA predates many other Druid groups. It has also survived longer than a number of others without dying on the vine. We must be doing something right.

**.Helgaleena** So many other modern druid traditions consider ours less 'valid' because ours are less overlaid with historical window dressing. But I am firmly suspicious of any 'path' that charges me money. That means there is some sort of bureaucracy with overhead expenses. \*shudder\*

**Thomas** Most groves have some sort of cost involved however charging fees rather than operating from offerings and sacrifices is simply abhorrent in my personal opinion.

**.Thomas** Personal experience lets me know that a ritual involves cost for the meal and sometimes paying for city permits. Also those of us that give out charity have increased expenses.

**.Jess Helgaleena** -- That's why I'm not 'formally' a member of the SCA anymore. XP

**Helgaleena** Contributing for pot-luck and space rental is different! Any friendly humans would do that much! But teachings? I am not smarter than a shrubbery! Even if I have been to grad school.

**.Thomas** It's a balance.

**Ellis** Personally I distrust any group that doesn't charge something. They say you get what you pay for, and all of the major Druid groups charge something: <http://www.mithrilstar.org/node/23> BUT, there may be good reasons for not charging. No overhead could be one (not very likely, but possible). Or, the group could be run by a number of wealthy elites, who can afford to pay for everything out of their own pocket. That might be a good reason to NOT trust them. Stands to reason though. RDNA was born at Carleton College, a private institution with very high tuition. No doubt a certain amount of snobbery persists. What Other Druid/Pagan Groups Charge for Membership | Order of the Mithril Star

**.Thomas** I don't know about snobbery being part and parcel of it. No Druid speaks for all Druidism however. Not even all the larger bodies. I simply cannot see the validity in charging fees. Druids have a

history of accepting offerings and sacrifices. One is limited to the very recent history if they want to cite fees in the Druid customs, through they do appear in some of the Mediterranean mystery religions. The Roman Death Societies come to mind. But even then those who paid in saw a direct benefit from what they paid, above and beyond any teaching that may have been given. The modern concept of paying for teaching only may appeal to some, but it is by no means validated by larger groups in the contemporary period making use of it.

**.Scott** People charge fees for Reiki Treatments, Massage Therapy, Psychic readings, classes at community education, coaching sessions, tutoring sessions, etc. What makes Druid education, mentoring, classes, or teaching services so different? People pay for memberships to all kinds of things - even NPR, PBS, etc to get great programming and cultural outlets that they want to see elevated, and that they believe in. What makes Druid Organizations so "special" that you think they should be free?

**Ellis** A few years back, when the RDG began holding our yearly Gatherings, we were criticized for charging \$15 for the weekend. Now, this is the exact same amount that the California State Parks charged for a single camp site (uhm, there was actually an additional \$7 for the reservation), but some thought it too be too much, and quickly pointed out another Grove on the other coast that held an annual Beltane campout for free (except it wasn't really as that Park system charged \$15 per carload per day for entrance. But let's not quibble). The CA State Parks charge about \$280 for two nights for a group site at the particular park our Gathering was held at. Where was that \$280 supposed to come from? We provide our new members with a cdrom course. Where does the money for postage, the disk, the cover for the disk, etc., supposed to come from? Or we could just leave our new members to figure it all out for themselves, as other groups do. Oh, then there is the gifting of the Seren Derwydd by the 2nd Order's AD (whcih we were misled into believing was customary practice in the Reform, so is now a tradition with us -- and the price of silver has gone through the roof. So, who pays for all this if not a well off AD? This implies that only those who are well off should aspire to the 3rd Order, does it not?

**.Thomas** It's not a question of whether or not they should be free, but how the financing for them should be derived and how it should be repositioned following its being gained. Again, fees for it are very recent and not agreed upon custom in the Druid traditions.

**.Sébastien** Sounds like someone is trying to recruit new members within RDNA facebook group for the Order of the Mithril Star... ROFL

**Helgaleena** I'll grow my own, thanks.

**Thomas** It is interesting that when the seed thought of this thread was about membership structure it has evolved into a discussion about finance. Perhaps it is a sign of the times. Ellis it isn't about paying the cost of reserving a campsite. That was covered earlier in the thread, incidentally. What this was about, in context of the thread is membership fees alone.

**.Thomas** And I am unaware of a gifting of anything at Third Order. As I recall it centered on the vigiling.

**Thomas** I would be interested in finding out where information on gifting a chunk of precious metal came from, or the concept of the AD at other than the local grove level. It sounds more OMS specific custom than the Reform as a whole.

**.Helgaleena** materialistic frippery, reminds me of all the 'charity' free address labels I get as junk mail. Overhead, trying to play upon my sense of guilt by making trees into paper to 'save the environment' by sending their office money. Scott does a sandwich taste better when I charge you \$50 than when I just hand it to you? Even the RDNA is one way among many. Some ArchDruids will charge you for a CD-

rom and a silver thingy, some will just help you gratis and not give you more than what you get in vigil, mostly on your own.

**.Stacey** Wow, so much to take in! Where is your state park Br. Ellis? I've group camped at Mt. Diablo State Park and that is only \$30/night for a group camp. From my understanding (and Bros. Mike and Daniel can chime in) that Carleton doesn't turn anyone away for lack of funds. Because someone is lucky enough to have space to have a services doesn't make them a snob. The Berkeley Grove used to meet at "Hal's Spot" in Tilden Park and sometimes at the Berkeley Rose Garden for High Days. After the Isaac Affair and Live Oak Grove hived off services were held at Emmon Bodfish's property where he had enough space to have a grove site and be able to plant eight sacred trees (one in each of the directions and High Day). After Emmon passed to Apple Isle and we lost the grove site, by the good graces of my mom's passing and I was able to buy a house, there was an area behind my house that we were able to turn into a grove site and plant eight sacred trees again. That said nothing was ever charged but we all just sort of chipped, in with time mostly. High Day potlucks were themed according to the particular High Day and everyone brought something. We helped maintain the grove site, watered it, did tree care, replaced trees if they died. People chipped in with time or money if they could.

**.Stacey** Maybe because the grove was formed by people either still in school, or just starting in their careers, no one really had much money, and so we did what we could. I maintained Emmon's grove site for five years after he passed and I think that is how I was able to find a house in woods in the bay area that was affordable, both which are practically non-existent. I will always be grateful for that.

**.Mike TheFool** I got a copy of Druid chronicles, black book and greenbook and apocrypha and ribbons from Richard when I vigilled. Plus a few stories tailored to my needs. My tradition was to give a copy of chronicles and other readings to 2nd orders, and a natural object and a stiff drink, sometimes a little quest. For third I was a bit overly generous and don't expect others to follow suit of a silver sigil pendant, copy of the ARDA (digital now) ribbons and the liturgies. They buy breakfast for me. Making something from hand like a staff would be just as nice. Maybe some embroidery. Also the size of the pendant neednt be the honking big one ounces I did, they could be quite small or an ear-ring or of wood and engraved.

In the end, I think an exchange of gifts is a nice idea, in addition to an exchange of ideas thoughts and blessings. After all it is the beginning of very long-lasting peer-relationship, best to start off by indicating the depth of such a sacred thing. I have no problem with up front fees for services, and applaud slidescale generosity pricing for poorer grove members. But in the end, it is up to the artist or priest to decide what is given in free kindness and what requires a fee to cover costs of time and resources.

I think it is better to err on side of transparency and offer help with finding free sources too - such as encouraging lazy magicians to "heal thyself first". Money has always been collected, sometimes formally, but the danger in either way is that a concern with money and/or reluctance to donate moderately without needing to be nagged is a hard balance to come to in a group. Even the big boys on the religious scene struggle with that one!!

**.Sébastien** Stacey, it sounds like how we do it here at Raven's Grove. We have actually two places where we hold our rituals; we may have a third location. Our potlucks are the focus of gatherings, they are actually great feast! We have so much fun... :-)

**Sébastien** <----- Love's Mike! well like a brother! oh like a Druid brother that is! lol

**.Stacey** Yes, when I did my Third Order ordination I was gifted a silver sigil (Isaac style) from Brother Mike, and ribbons and a staff from the ordaining AD and his wife. It was Berkeley Grove/Live Oak Grove tradition too that the new Third Order was given a red chalice and sickle. I found a second red chalice in Emmon's house (above and beyond his) and checked in and it was okay for me to use (perhaps he had meant it for me when he was alive?), and I wear his sickle.

**.Sébastien** I personally have no problem with druids making an honest buck out of their own druidry. Such things as writing books, making druidic paraphernalia is all fine with me!

**.Sébastien** Lovely story Stacey about Emmon :-)

**.Sébastien** thank you for sharing a bit of RDNA history!

**Ellis** Humboldt Redwoods State Park, and we usually reserve the very least expensive of the groups sites (only holds 40 campsites). Oh, we've been thinking about moving it, maybe down to one of the Santa Cruz area parks (but they are even more expensive but more centrally located). Of course, our deal is Redwoods -- they are a must. I think the Redwood Parks are more expensive (higher demand?). I remember my old Santa Cruz Grove used to rent a group site at Pinacles -- a privately owned campground--even had a pool. I remember it being half the cost. But the State Parks in CA are in trouble, with many being closed. Group sites are starting to be scarce.

**.Ellis** Sebastian: Yes, I'm trying to recruit for OMS here. Except that you have to 3rd Order to join (or at least heading that way), you need to be oriented towards naturism, polyamory, and be ultra, ultra liberal (in the US sense). Any takers here? I thought not.

**.Scott** I'm not ultra ultra liberal and in OMS. That's not a requirement in any written form according to OMS documents. I'm a government skeptic generally (and I shake things up a bit admittedly)..but as I say - "Diversity is Good!"

**.Thomas** I will agree with that. Diversity is good.

**.Sébastien** Thank you Ellis for proving my point. We all have our own truth, and maybe yours is different from RDNA, maybe you should accept that. Wishing you the best with your association! Diversity is good! :-)

**.Sébastien** <---- 3rd Order and not interested, thank you for asking!

**.Ellis** Here's my take (and if you've ever read my blog (<http://mithrilstar.org/el>) you already know this. If it were up to me, EVERYTHING would be free. Money would not exist. Call it Star Trek Communism, or El's pipe-weed dream, but that is the gist of it. BUT -- I am not the head of RDG, and only the clerk of our NoDaL (like RDNA's CoDaL, only active). Although I am Patriarch of OMS, it is mostly ceremonial, and OMS is run by a BoD, and I can vote only in the case of a tie. I'm actually looking for a successor. I think I am getting too old for this. Views From The Redwood Coast | One Druid's personal opinions about life, liberty, the pursuit of hap

**.Sébastien** We all get your point Ellis !

**Stacey** You might want to go with the family camp rather than the group camp. That looks like only \$35/night at Humboldt SP.

**.Ellis** We looked at those, but there are restrictions on the size of the family, and it was hard to find adjacent sites. Also, there is the little matter of privacy. As mentioned elsewhere, many of us are naturists, and enjoy the Redwoods "au naturel."

**Helgaleena** Ellis, being a 3rd Order is like puberty. It's not something you can just take off like a costume. You could quit having Grove events, but you will never stop being what you have become.

**.Helgaleena** My Grove is private btw. It's very tiny.

.Stacey Thank you for saying that healingline. My grove is just me right now so it's not really a grove but it's still a part of me and druidism guides me every day though that is not my most active practice right now.

## NEWS

### That Time Kirk Cameron Infiltrated a Druid Ritual From The Wild Hunt Blog

Why, in the name of all that is good and holy, is anyone still paying attention to [Kirk Cameron](#)? In what way is this former teen television star turned [laughable Christian caricature](#) relevant enough to our culture [to get a primetime interview slot on CNN](#)? Does anyone really care about [his views on homosexuality or same-sex marriage](#)? The stark truth is that his once familiar face, tied to his evangelical Christian views, are the only thing keeping him on the fame radar (albeit in a d-list reality-television manner). However, since there are still folks out there who seem to take Mr. Cameron seriously for some reason, here's a gold-plated proof that no one, not even the most fervent Christian "Growing Pains" star, should give his "[crocoduck](#)" theology mainstream attention.



Crocoduck proves God exists!

In 2006, [Cameron used his "excellent acting talents" to "infiltrate" a Druid ritual](#). Specifically, a ritual put on by [Ravens Cry Grove](#) (part of [Ár nDraíocht Féin](#)) in Southern California. Cameron and [Ray "Banana" Comfort](#) secretly recorded the ritual, and lied about secretly recording the ritual when questioned about it (because it's OK to lie to non-Christians apparently). You can download the show, [here](#). You can also find an edited version of the segment, [here](#).



Ravens Cry Grove, the folks Kirk Cameron were concerned might sacrifice him. Cameron says he thought he got out of there "*by the skin of his teeth*," insinuating that he felt endangered by a group of California Druids singing, chanting, and sharing fellowship. This is the man who CNN wants to talk about religion with. This is the man [Piers Morgan calls "brave" and "honest"](#) for spouting the same old conservative Christian party line about marriage and homosexuality that has fallen increasingly out of favor in the United States. The bitter truth is that Cameron is a sad has-been

who depends on someone, anyone, finding him offensive so he can feed his attention-starved ego for a few moments more. Even sadder, mainstream media outlets are obliging, when they could have picked from a thousand theologians, scholars, or religious leaders to opine about morality or marriage. Instead, we have the star of "[Left Behind 2: Tribulation Force.](#)"

In the future, when CNN or any other major news network decide to give Kirk Cameron precious airtime that could be used to discuss serious issues, or talk with actually important figures, just remember they are instead bolstering the limping career of a man who thought infiltrating a Druid grove in California was a dangerous and worthwhile activity. Cameron's views on marriage and homosexuality are offensive to me, but I'm almost as offended by the media outlets who seem to think giving him a spotlight is a good idea.

**ADDENDUM:** When I wrote this post yesterday, I quoted a site called "[Objective: Ministries.](#)" It seems they are [a hoax website that specializes in blurring the line between parody and reality.](#) Kirk Cameron really did "infiltrate" a Druid ritual, and really did a radio show where he bragged about his ability to fool the Druids, but the rhetoric I quoted from Objective: Ministries is not "real." Though, it sounded so like Christian rhetoric I've heard elsewhere that I didn't even think to double-check it. So, in short, I was punked. I've removed quotations from that site, leaving everything else intact. Mea Culpa.

## That Chicago Case



**Note:** Not sure which Druid group, if any, the suspect belonged to. But might come up in the news. All the modern Druid groups have naturally abandoned any form of religious-based acceptance of violence, although some may support participation in a formal war. Regardless, the case will be in August, and no indication his personal affiliation had any direct involvement according to prosecutor. —Mike

## Murder defendant's Druid beliefs at issue

Judge urged to block prosecution from introducing postings on religious website by Oswego man

accused of killing his wife, children

Christopher Vaughn

March 24, 2012|By Steve Schmadeke, Chicago Tribune reporter

Attorneys for Christopher Vaughn are asking a judge to bar any mention of the Oswego man's Druid beliefs when he goes on trial this year on charges of killing his wife and three young children.

Public Defender Jaya Varghese argued in Will County court Friday that mentioning the religion would "significantly impact" his constitutional rights to a fair trial. She also said Vaughn's religious beliefs weren't relevant.

## Cop: Vaughn's wife may have shot children, herself

By Steve Schmadeke — Chicago Tribune

Created: Friday, March 23, 2012 1:00 p.m. CDT

(MCT) — An Illinois State Police investigator has testified that Christopher Vaughn, charged with killing his wife and three children, may not be responsible for their deaths, a former member of Vaughn's defense team said.

Sgt. Robert Deel, who is no longer a crime scene investigator after prosecutors faulted his work on another murder case, testified that the evidence convinced him that Vaughn's wife might have shot her husband and children before killing herself, the former defense team member said. Vaughn suffered minor gunshot wounds in his wrist and leg.

Deel's testimony and some new details in the case are included in a letter sent this month by Vaughn's former private investigator to the state inspector general's office, asking for an outside examination into "issues of serious negligence and or misconduct" by state police investigators.

Vaughn, 37, is charged with killing his family in their Ford Expedition after pulling off Interstate 55 in Channahon Township on the way from Oswego to a Springfield water park in 2007. His trial is scheduled to begin in August.

The letter by private investigator Bill Clutter alleges state police had "tunnel vision" that led them to overlook bullet trajectory evidence and ignore concerns from Deel.

The letter also claims a bullet was fired at Vaughn's head by his wife, Kimberly, that was deflected away when he raised his left arm and the projectile hit his heavy silver watch.

Deel said during a deposition with Vaughn's attorneys, according to the letter, that his fellow investigators quickly dismissed the possibility that anyone but Christopher Vaughn was responsible for the slayings:

"I wasn't being listened to by them," he said. "In fact, every time that I offered up something that was contrary to what they said, they had some reason why I didn't know what I was talking about, and basically it all fell back on that Christopher Vaughn is a criminal mastermind and he knows all about crime scenes and that he would be able to fool me into thinking that something else happened."

Investigators said they believed that after Vaughn pulled over, he retrieved his handgun from a roof rack, wrapped it in his fleece jacket, then shot his wife in the head and shot each of his children — ages 12, 11 and 8 — twice from the vehicle's passenger side.

Deel told Vaughn's attorneys that he didn't think that version of events was possible, according to the letter.

After about 10 hours of questioning, the letter said, Vaughn gave police a brief account of what happened:

"I got back in the truck and I looked over at Kim and I think she — I think she had a gun. It doesn't — right in my face and I put my hand up (takes left arm up to his forehead) and ugh, and (long pause) everything kind of went numb and uhm, (long pause) I don't know if she was mad at me or what. There was no way she could have hurt the kids.

"I just didn't think it was real ... it was like my mind shut off. ... I don't remember her saying anything. ... I looked over and thought I saw a gun but, I knew that was impossible — why does Kim have a gun?"

Vaughn told authorities he checked the roof rack and tires after pulling over because his wife felt sick. He got back into their SUV, looked down and saw his leg bleeding, got out, fell to the ground and limped down the road and flagged down a car, according to the letter.

Kimberly Vaughn was taking migraine medication that her physician has testified would increase the risk of having suicidal thoughts, the letter said. Prosecutors have said there's no evidence she was suicidal.

The letter also indicates the forensic puzzle that jurors may have to sort out in the case, including how Vaughn's blood got on his wife's retracted seat belt, how her husband's blood got on Kimberly's thumb and the reasons for the bullet holes in Vaughn's fleece jacket.

All of that evidence, Clutter wrote, supports Vaughn's version of events

## Woodhenge discovered near Stonehenge



The down-to-earth evidence for a majestic former "woodhenge"

**By Jane O'Brien, BBC West of England correspondent**

British archaeologists have uncovered evidence of what they believe to be a huge wooden cousin of Stonehenge, the famous stone circle in Wiltshire, UK.

The discovery of deep holes thought to have supported large oak poles came near another stone circle at Avebury, just 20 miles from Stonehenge.

Archaeologist Michael Pitts told the BBC: "There are big implications for Stonehenge. If there were lots of timber structures like, or even bigger than, Stonehenge around at

the same time, then Stonehenge is no longer something weird or unique. It becomes part of the religious scenery of the time."

The team uncovered the foundations of the timber structure at Avebury's Sanctuary. There were two concentric stone circles here which were destroyed in the 18th Century.

In the centre of where these would have been, giant post holes have been found. They are up to six feet deep and could have supported wooden pillars up to 17ft high. Six to eight rings appear to have existed.

One theory is that they were supports for a ritual building but they are much thicker and closer together than would have been needed to hold up a roof. The archaeologists believe they are more likely to have formed a free-standing "woodhenge".

They think there may have been nearly 40 similar wooden structures in the ancient kingdom of Wessex - some of them much bigger.



The Avebury stone circle, near the Sanctuary, is 241 metres in diameter

The Avebury Sanctuary stone circle was last excavated in 1930.

The National Trust, which manages the site, says the new information could be used to create a reconstruction which would help people understand what Avebury looked like 4,500 years ago.

*NOTE: No news if the original "mudhenge" was confirmed or whether a pretty ring of flowers was the original inspiration.*

*-Mike*



## Stonehenge design was 'inspired by sounds'



By Jonathan Amos Science correspondent, BBC News, Vancouver  
The structure may mimic the way designers perceived sound-wave interference

Music could have been an inspiration for the design of Stonehenge, according to an American researcher.

Steven Waller's intriguing idea is that ancient Britons could have based the layout of the great monument, in part, on the way they perceived sound.

He has been able to show how two flutes played in a field can produce an auditory illusion that mimics in space the position of the henge's pillars.

Mr Waller presented the idea at the AAAS meeting in Vancouver, Canada.

He told the BBC: "My theory is that the ancient Britons, when they were hearing two pipers in a field, were experiencing sound wave interference patterns, where in certain locations as you walked around the pair of pipers, you would hear loud or quiet zones.

"If you could look at it from an overhead view, it would look like the spokes of a wheel. And, as you walk around the circle, every time you come to one of these sound-wave cancellation points, it feels like there is this massive invisible object in front of you.

"Put all this 'vision in your mind' together and it forms a Stonehenge-like structure."

Mr Waller is an expert in "archaeoacoustics", which examines the role sound might have played in ancient cultures.

It is just one of a host of different topics being discussed here at the [annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science](#) (AAAS).

### 'Supernatural explanations'

The La Mesa, California-based researcher said he had [demonstrated the auditory henge effect](#) using blindfolded subjects.



The phenomenon of interference leads to amplified and silenced regions  
He took these people into a field where two pipers were playing and afterwards asked them to draw diagrams of the soundscape they had experienced. "These people were not told anything about interference patterns or Stonehenge; they were completely naive subjects," he recalled. "And it was very interesting when they took the blindfolds off, and after having described the presence of large structures to then discover nothing was there in the field except these two flutes - they were flabbergasted."  
Mr Waller said his ideas had been further strengthened by measurements he had made of the acoustic shadows actually cast by the Stonehenge megaliths. He found they accurately reproduced the interference pattern that would be generated by two flutes playing in the centre of the monument.

Mr Waller argued that the sounds' behaviour would have utterly captivated the ancients. "People didn't even know that sound was propagated by pressure waves until a few centuries ago," he said. "We know that sound was a great mystery to the ancients because there are many myths about echoes being a spirit that lives in the rock and which calls back, or that thunder was caused by large birds in the sky flapping their wings. They had supernatural explanations for all these sound phenomena."  
[Jonathan.Amos-INTERNET@bbc.co.uk](mailto:Jonathan.Amos-INTERNET@bbc.co.uk) and follow

## American Stonehenge: Monumental Instructions for the Post-Apocalypse

By Randall Sullivan  04.20.09

Editor;s Note: Wow, this guy really was driven by something to do this work. Big rocks always capture our attention.



The Georgia Guidestones may be the most enigmatic monument in the US: huge slabs of granite, inscribed with directions for rebuilding civilization after the apocalypse. Only one man knows who created them—and he's not talking.  
*Photo: Dan Winters*

**THE GEORGIA GUIDESTONES GUIDEBOOK**



Published by Elberton Granite in  
[1981: Download Complete Book \[70MB PDF\]](#)

**The strangest monument in America** looms over a barren knoll in northeastern Georgia. Five massive slabs of polished granite rise out of the earth in a star pattern. The rocks are each 16 feet tall, with four of them weighing more than 20 tons apiece. Together they support a 25,000-pound capstone. Approaching the edifice, it's hard not to think immediately of

England's [Stonehenge](#) or possibly the [ominous monolith](#) from *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Built in 1980, these pale gray rocks are quietly awaiting the end of the world as we know it.

Called the [Georgia Guidestones](#), the monument is a mystery—nobody knows exactly who commissioned it or why. The only clues to its origin are on a [nearby plaque](#) on the ground—which gives the dimensions and explains a series of intricate notches and holes that correspond to the movements of the sun and stars—and the "guides" themselves, directives carved into the rocks. These instructions appear in eight languages ranging from English to Swahili and reflect a peculiar New Age ideology. Some are vaguely eugenic (GUIDE REPRODUCTION WISELY—IMPROVING FITNESS AND DIVERSITY); others prescribe standard-issue hippie mysticism (PRIZE TRUTH—BEAUTY—LOVE—SEEKING HARMONY WITH THE INFINITE).

What's most widely agreed upon—based on the evidence available—is that the Guidestones are meant to instruct the dazed survivors of some impending apocalypse as they attempt to reconstitute civilization. Not everyone is comfortable with this notion. A few days before I visited, the stones had been [splattered with polyurethane](#) and spray-painted with graffiti, including slogans like "Death to the new world order." This defacement was the first serious act of vandalism in the Guidestones' history, but it was hardly the first objection to their existence. In fact, for more than three decades this uncanny structure in the heart of the Bible Belt has been generating responses that range from enchantment to horror. Supporters (notable among them Yoko Ono) have praised the messages as a stirring call to rational thinking, akin to Thomas Paine's [The Age of Reason](#). Opponents have attacked them as the Ten Commandments of the Antichrist.

Whoever the anonymous architects of the Guidestones were, they knew what they were doing: The monument is a highly engineered structure that flawlessly tracks the sun. It also manages to engender endless fascination, thanks to a carefully orchestrated aura of mystery. And the stones have attracted plenty of devotees to defend against folks who would like them destroyed. Clearly, whoever had the monument placed here understood one thing very well: People prize what they don't understand at least as much as what they do.

**The story of the Georgia Guidestones** began on a Friday afternoon in June 1979, when an elegant gray-haired gentleman showed up in Elbert County, made his way to the offices of Elberton Granite Finishing, and introduced himself as Robert C. Christian. He claimed to represent "a small group of loyal Americans" who had been planning the installation of an unusually large and complex stone monument. Christian had come to Elberton—the county seat and the granite capital of the world—because he believed its quarries produced the finest stone on the planet.

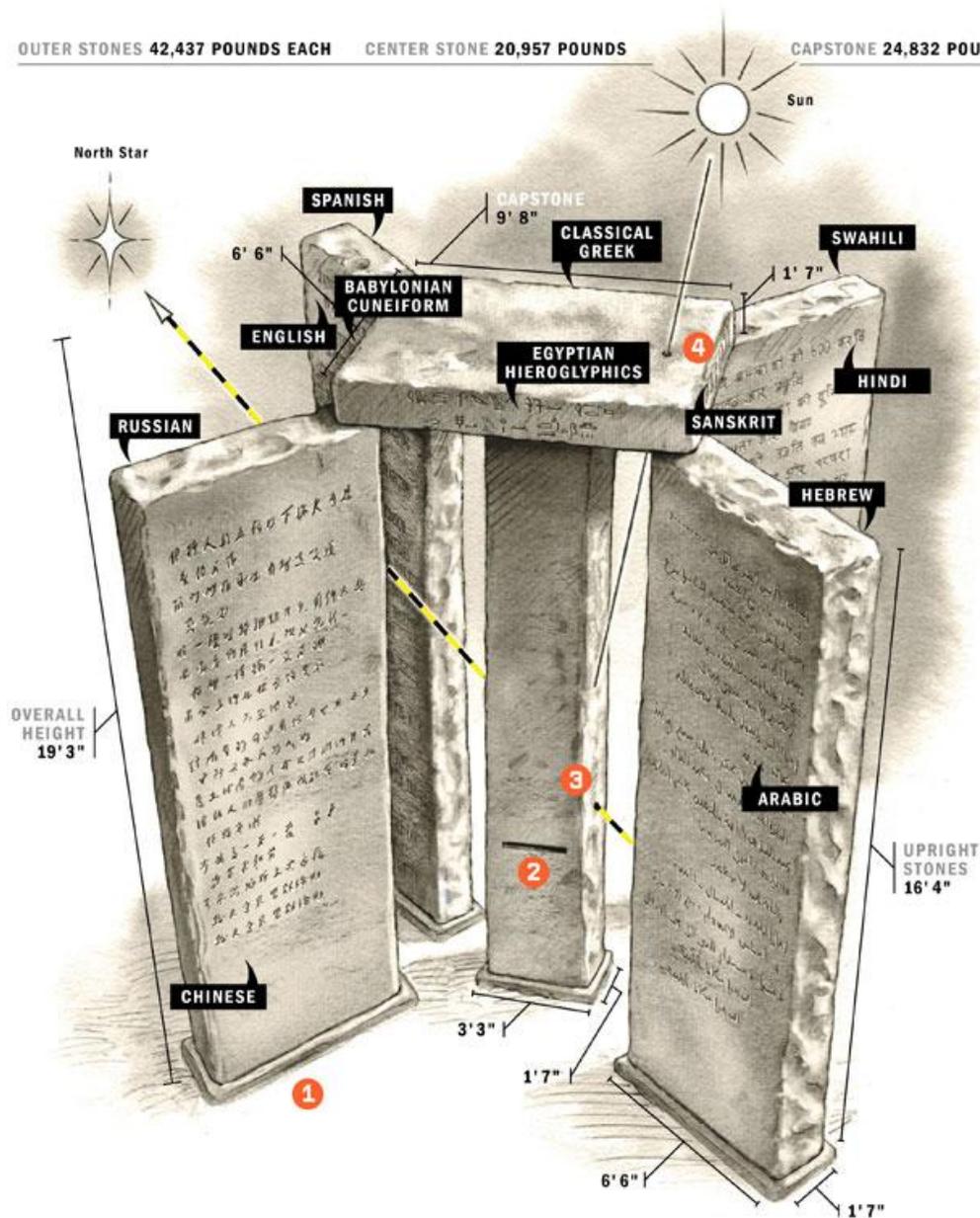
Joe Fendley, Elberton Granite's president, nodded absently, distracted by the rush to complete his weekly payroll. But when Christian began to describe the monument he had in mind, Fendley stopped what he was doing. Not only was the man asking for stones larger than any that had been quarried in the county, he also wanted them cut, finished, and assembled into some kind of enormous astronomical instrument.

What in the world would it be for? Fendley asked. Christian explained that the structure he had in mind would serve as a compass, calendar, and clock. It would also need to be engraved with a set of guides written in eight of the world's major languages. And it had to be capable of withstanding the most catastrophic events, so that the shattered remnants of humanity would be able to use those guides to reestablish a better civilization than the one that was about to destroy itself.

OUTER STONES 42,437 POUNDS EACH

CENTER STONE 20,957 POUNDS

CAPSTONE 24,832 POUNDS



## MONUMENTAL PRECISION

Built to survive the apocalypse, the Georgia Guidestones are not merely instructions for the future—the massive granite slabs also function as a clock, calendar, and compass.

**1** The monument sits at the highest point in Elbert County and is oriented to track the sun's east-west migration year-round.

**2** On an equinox or solstice, visitors who stand at the west side of the "mail slot" are positioned to see the sun rise on the horizon.

**3** An eye-level hole drilled into the center support stone allows stargazers on the south side to locate Polaris, the North Star.

**4** A 7/8-inch hole drilled through the capstone focuses a sunbeam on the center column and at noon pinpoints the day of the year.

*Text: Erik Malinowski; illustration: Steve Sanford*

Fendley is now deceased, but shortly after the Guidestones went up, an Atlanta television reporter asked what he was thinking when he first heard Christian's plan. "I was thinking, 'I got a nut in here now. How am I going get him out?'" Fendley said. He attempted to discourage the man by quoting him a price several times higher than for any project commissioned there before. The job would require

special tools, heavy equipment, and paid consultants, Fendley explained. But Christian merely nodded and asked how long it would take. Fendley didn't rightly know—six months, at least. He wouldn't be able to even consider such an undertaking, he added, until he knew it could be paid for. When Christian asked whether there was a banker in town he considered trustworthy, Fendley saw his chance to unload the strange man and sent him to look for Wyatt Martin, president of the Granite City Bank.

The tall and courtly Martin—the only man in Elberton besides Fendley known to have met R. C. Christian face-to-face—is now 78. "Fendley called me and said, 'A kook over here wants some kind of crazy monument,'" Martin says. "But when this fella showed up he was wearing a very nice, expensive suit, which made me take him a little more seriously. And he was well-spoken, obviously an educated person." Martin was naturally taken aback when the man told him straight out that *R. C. Christian* was a pseudonym. He added that his group had been planning this secretly for 20 years and wanted to remain anonymous forever. "And when he told me what it was he and this group wanted to do, I just about fell over," Martin says. "I told him, 'I believe you'd be just as well off to take the money and throw it out in the street into the gutters.' He just sort of looked at me and shook his head, like he felt kinda sorry for me, and said, 'You don't understand.'"

Martin led Christian down the street to the town square, where the city had commissioned a towering Bicentennial Memorial Fountain, which included a ring of 13 granite panels, each roughly 2 by 3 feet, signifying the original colonies. "I told him that was about the biggest project ever undertaken around here, and it was nothing compared to what he was talking about," Martin says. "That didn't seem to bother him at all." Promising to return on Monday, the man went off to charter a plane and spend the weekend scouting locations from the air. "By then I half believed him," Martin says.

When Christian came back to the bank Monday, Martin explained that he could not proceed unless he could verify the man's true identity and "get some assurance you can pay for this thing." Eventually, the two negotiated an agreement: Christian would reveal his real name on the condition that Martin promise to serve as his sole intermediary, sign a confidentiality agreement pledging never to disclose the information to another living soul, and agree to destroy all documents and records related to the project when it was finished. "He said he was going to send the money from different banks across the country," Martin says, "because he wanted to make sure it couldn't be traced. He made it clear that he was very serious about secrecy."

Before leaving town, Christian met again with Fendley and presented the contractor with a shoe box containing a wooden model of the monument he wanted, plus 10 or so pages of detailed specifications. Fendley accepted the model and instructions but remained skeptical until Martin phoned the following Friday to say he had just received a \$10,000 deposit. After that, Fendley stopped questioning and started working. "My daddy loved a challenge," says Fendley's daughter, Melissa Fendley Caruso, "and he said this was the most challenging project in the history of Elbert County."

**Construction of the** Guidestones got under way later that summer. Fendley's company lovingly documented the progress of the work in hundreds of photographs. Jackhammers were used to gouge 114 feet into the rock at Pyramid Quarry, searching for hunks of granite big enough to yield the final stones. Fendley and his crew held their breath when the first 28-ton slab was lifted to the surface, wondering if their derricks would buckle under the weight. A special burner (essentially a narrowly focused rocket motor used to cut and finish large blocks of granite) was trucked to Elberton to clean and size the stones, and a pair of master stonecutters was hired to smooth them.

Fendley and Martin helped Christian find a suitable site for the Guidestones in Elbert County: a flat-topped hill rising above the pastures of the Double 7 Farms, with vistas in all directions. For \$5,000, owner Wayne Mullinex signed over a 5-acre plot. In addition to the payment, Christian granted lifetime cattle-grazing rights to Mullinex and his children, and Mullinex's construction company got to lay the foundation for the Guidestones.

With the purchase of the land, the Guidestones' future was set. Christian said good-bye to Fendley at the granite company office, adding, "You'll never see me again." Christian then turned and walked out the door—without so much as a handshake.

From then on, Christian communicated solely through Martin, writing a few weeks later to ask that ownership of the land and monument be transferred to Elbert County, which still holds it. Christian reasoned that civic pride would protect it over time. "All of Mr. Christian's correspondence came from different cities around the country," Martin says. "He never sent anything from the same place twice."

Daybreak: A carefully cut slot in the Guidestones' center column frames the sunrise on solstices and equinoxes.  
Photo: Dan Winters



The astrological specifications for the Guidestones were so complex that Fendley had to retain the services of an astronomer from the University of Georgia to help implement the design. The four outer stones were to be oriented based on the limits of the sun's yearly migration. The center column needed two precisely calibrated features: a hole through which the North Star would be visible at all times, and a slot that was to align with the position of the rising sun during the solstices and equinoxes. The principal component of the capstone was a 7\8-inch aperture through which a beam of sunlight would pass at noon each day, shining on the center stone to indicate the day of the year.

The main feature of the monument, though, would be the 10 dictates carved into both faces of the outer stones, in eight languages: English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic,

Hebrew, Hindi, and Swahili. A mission statement of sorts (LET THESE BE GUIDESTONES TO AN AGE OF REASON) was also to be engraved on the sides of the capstone in Egyptian hieroglyphics, classical Greek, Sanskrit, and Babylonian cuneiform. The United Nations provided some of the translations (including those for the dead languages), which were stenciled onto the stones and etched with a sandblaster.

By early 1980, a bulldozer was scraping the Double 7 hilltop to bedrock, where five granite slabs serving as a foundation were laid out in a paddle-wheel design. A 100-foot-tall crane was used to lift the stones into place. Each of the outer rocks was 16 feet 4 inches high, 6 feet 6 inches wide, and 1 foot 7 inches thick. The center column was the same (except only half the width), and the capstone measured 9 feet 8 inches long, 6 feet 6 inches wide, and 1 foot 7 inches thick. Including the foundation stones, the monument's total weight was almost 240,000 pounds. Covered with sheets of black plastic in preparation for an unveiling on the vernal equinox, the Guidestones towered over the cattle that continued to graze beneath it at the approach of winter's end.

The monument ignited controversy before it was even finished. The first rumor began among members of the Elberton Granite Association, jealous of the attention being showered on one of their own: Fendley was behind the whole thing, they said, aided by his friend Martin, the banker. The gossip became so poisonous that the two men agreed to take a lie detector test at the Elberton Civic Center. The scandal withered when *The Elberton Star* reported that they had both passed convincingly, but the publicity brought a new wave of complaints. As word of what was being inscribed spread, Martin recalls, even people he considered friends asked him why he was doing the devil's work. A local minister, James Travenstead, predicted that "occult groups" would flock to the Guidestones, warning that "someday a sacrifice will take place here." Those inclined to agree were hardly discouraged by Charlie Clamp, the sandblaster charged with carving each of the 4,000-plus characters on the stones: During the hundreds of hours he spent etching the guides, Clamp said, he had been constantly distracted by "strange music and disjointed voices."

The team that built the Guidestones didn't know who was financing the project—just that it was the biggest monument in county history. Local banker Wyatt Martin inspects the English lettering with sandblaster Charlie Clamp before the 1980 unveiling.

Photo: Courtesy of Fendley Enterprises Inc.



**The unveiling on March 22, 1980**, was a community celebration. Congressman Doug Barnard, whose district contained Elberton, addressed a crowd of 400 that flowed down the hillside and included television news crews from Atlanta. Soon Joe Fendley was the most famous Elbertonian since Daniel Tucker, the 18th-century minister memorialized in the folk song "Old Dan Tucker." Bounded by the Savannah and Broad rivers but miles from the nearest interstate—"as rural as rural can be," in the words of current *Star* publisher Gary Jones—Elberton was suddenly a tourist destination, with visitors from all over the world showing up to see the Guidestones. "We'd have people from Japan and China and India and everywhere wanting to go up and see the monument," Martin says. And Fendley's boast that he had "put Elberton on the map" was affirmed literally in spring 2005, when *National Geographic Traveler* listed the Guidestones as a feature in its Geotourism MapGuide to Appalachia.

But many who read what was written on the stones were unsettled. Guide number one was, of course, the real stopper: **MAINTAIN HUMANITY UNDER 500,000,000 IN PERPETUAL BALANCE WITH NATURE.** There were already 4.5 billion people on the planet, meaning eight out of nine had

to go (today it would be closer to 12 out of 13). This instruction was echoed and expanded by tenet number two: **GUIDE REPRODUCTION WISELY—IMPROVING FITNESS AND DIVERSITY.** It didn't take a great deal of imagination to draw an analogy to the practices of, among others, the Nazis. Guide number three instructed readers to unite humanity with a living new language. This sent a shiver up the spine of local ministers who knew that the Book of Revelations warned of a common tongue and a one-world government as the accomplishments of the Antichrist. Guide number four—**RULE PASSION—FAITH—TRADITION—AND ALL THINGS WITH TEMPERED REASON—**was similarly threatening to Christians committed to the primacy of faith over all. The last six guides were homiletic by comparison. **PROTECT PEOPLE AND NATIONS WITH FAIR LAWS AND JUST COURTS. LET ALL NATIONS RULE INTERNALLY RESOLVING EXTERNAL DISPUTES IN A WORLD COURT. AVOID PETTY LAWS AND USELESS OFFICIALS. BALANCE PERSONAL RIGHTS WITH SOCIAL DUTIES. PRIZE TRUTH—BEAUTY—LOVE—SEEKING HARMONY WITH THE INFINITE. BE NOT A CANCER ON THE EARTH—LEAVE ROOM FOR NATURE—LEAVE ROOM FOR NATURE.**

Even as locals debated the relative merits of these commandments, the dire predictions of Travenstead seemed to be coming true. Within a few months, a coven of witches from Atlanta adopted the Guidestones as their home away from home, making weekend pilgrimages to Elberton to stage various pagan rites ("dancing and chanting and all that kind of thing," Martin says) and at least one warlock-witch marriage ceremony. No humans were sacrificed on the altar of the stones, but there are rumors that several chickens were beheaded. A 1981 article in the monthly magazine *UFO Report* cited Naunie Batchelder (identified in the story as "a noted Atlanta psychic") as predicting that the true purpose of the guides would be revealed "within the next 30 years." Viewed from directly overhead, the Guidestones formed an X, the piece in *UFO Report* observed, making for a perfect landing site.

Visitors kept coming, but after several failed investigations into the identity of R. C. Christian, the media lost interest. Curiosity flared again briefly in 1993, when Yoko Ono contributed a track called "Georgia Stone" to a tribute album for avant-garde composer John Cage, with Ono chanting the 10th and final guide nearly verbatim: "Be not a cancer on Earth—leave room for nature—leave room for nature." A decade later, however, when comedienne Roseanne Barr tried to work a bit on the Guidestones into her comeback tour, nobody seemed to care.

Christian kept in touch with Martin, writing the banker so regularly that they became pen pals. Occasionally, Christian would call from a pay phone at the Atlanta airport to say he was in the area, and the two would rendezvous for dinner in the college town of Athens, a 40-mile drive west of Elberton. By this time, Martin no longer questioned Christian's secrecy. The older man had successfully deflected Martin's curiosity when the two first met, by quoting Henry James' observations of Stonehenge: "You

may put a hundred questions to these rough-hewn giants as they bend in grim contemplation of their fallen companions, but your curiosity falls dead in the vast sunny stillness that enshrouds them." Christian "never would tell me a thing about this group he belonged to," Martin says. The banker received his last letter from Christian right around the time of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and assumes the man—who would have been in his mid-eighties—has since passed away.

Joe Fendley of Elberton Granite Finishing posing with his masterpiece.

Photo: Courtesy of Fendley Enterprises Inc.



**The mysterious story** of R. C. Christian and the absence of information about the true meaning of the Guidestones was bound to become an irresistible draw for conspiracy theorists and "investigators" of all kinds. Not surprisingly, three decades later there is no shortage of observers rushing to fill the void with all sorts of explanations.

Among them is an activist named Mark Dice, author of a book called *The Resistance Manifesto*. In 2005, Dice (who was using a pseudonym of his own—"John Conner"—appropriated from the *Terminator* franchise's main character) began to demand that the Guidestones be "smashed into a million pieces." He claims that the monument has "a deep Satanic origin," a stance that has earned him plenty of coverage, both in print and on the Web. According to Dice, Christian was a high-ranking member of "a Luciferian secret society" at the forefront of the New World Order. "The elite are planning to develop successful life-extension technology in the next few decades that will nearly stop the aging process," Dice says, "and they fear that with the current population of Earth so high, the masses will be using resources that the elite want for themselves. The Guidestones are the New World Order's Ten Commandments. They're also a way for the elite to get a laugh at the expense of the uninformed masses, as their agenda stands as clear as day and the zombies don't even notice it."

Ironically, Dice's message has mainly produced greater publicity for the Guidestones. This, in turn, has brought fresh

visitors to the monument and made Elbert County officials even less inclined to remove the area's only major tourist attraction.

Phyllis Brooks, who runs the Elbert County Chamber of Commerce, pronounced herself aghast last November when the Guidestones were attacked by vandals for the first time ever. While Dice denies any involvement in the assault, he seems to have inspired it: Spray-painted on the stones were messages like "Jesus will beat u satanist" and "No one world government." Other defacements asserted that the Council on Foreign Relations is "ran by the devil," that the 9/11 attacks were an inside job, and that President Obama is a Muslim. The vandals also splashed the Guidestones with polyurethane, which is much more difficult to remove than paint. Despite the graffiti's alignment with his views, Dice says he disapproves of the acts. "A lot of people were glad such a thing happened and saw it as standing up against the New World Order," Dice says, "while others who are unhappy with the stones saw the actions as counterproductive and inappropriate."

Martin winces every time he hears Dice's "Luciferian secret society" take on the Guidestones. But while he disagrees, he also admits that he doesn't know for sure. "All I can tell you is that Mr. Christian always seemed a very decent and sincere fella to me."

A worker uses a special burner to finish a slab of Pyramid Blue granite.

Photo: Courtesy of Fendley Enterprises Inc.



Dice, of course, is far from the only person with a theory about the Guidestones. Jay Weidner, a former Seattle radio commentator turned erudite conspiracy hunter, has heavily invested time and energy into one of the most popular hypotheses. He argues that Christian and his associates were Rosicrucians, followers of the Order of the Rosy Cross, a secret society of mystics that originated in late medieval Germany and claim understanding of esoteric truths about nature, the universe, and the spiritual realm that have been concealed from ordinary people. Weidner considers the name R. C.

Christian an homage to the legendary 14th-century founder of the Rosicrucians, a man first identified as Frater C.R.C. and later as Christian Rosenkreuz. Secrecy, Weidner notes, has been a hallmark of the Rosicrucians, a group that announced itself to the world in the early 17th century with a pair of anonymous manifestos that created a huge stir across Europe, despite the fact that no one was ever able to identify a single member. While the guides on the Georgia stones fly in the face of orthodox Christian eschatology, they conform quite well to the tenets of Rosicrucianism, which stress reason and endorse a harmonic relationship with nature.

Weidner also has a theory about the purpose of the Guidestones. An authority on the hermetic and alchemical traditions that spawned the Rosicrucians, he believes that for generations the group has been passing down knowledge of a solar cycle that climaxes every 13,000 years. During this culmination, outsize coronal mass ejections are supposed to devastate Earth. Meanwhile, the shadowy organization behind the Guidestones is now orchestrating a "planetary chaos," Weidner believes, that began with the recent collapse of the US financial system and will result eventually in major disruptions of oil and food supplies, mass riots, and ethnic wars worldwide, all leading up to the Big Event on December 21, 2012. "They want to get the population down," Weidner says, "and this is what they think will do it. The Guidestones are there to instruct the survivors."

On hearing Weidner's ideas, Martin shakes his head and says it's "the sort of thing that makes me want to tell people everything I know." Martin has long since retired from banking and no longer lives in Elberton, yet he's still the Guidestones' official—and only—secret-keeper. "But I can't tell," the old man quickly adds. "I made a promise." Martin also made a promise to destroy all the records of his dealings with Christian, though he hasn't kept that one—at least not yet. In the back of his garage is a large plastic bin (actually, the hard-sided case of an IBM computer he bought back in 1983) stuffed with every document connected to the Guidestones that ever came into his possession, including the letters from Christian.

For years Martin thought he might write a book, but now he knows he probably won't. What he also won't do is allow me to look through the papers. When I ask whether he's prepared to take what he knows to his grave, Martin replies that Christian would want him to do just that: "All along, he said that who he was and where he came from had to be kept a secret. He said mysteries work that way. If you want to keep people interested, you can let them know only so much." The rest is enshrouded in the vast sunny stillness.

*Randall Sullivan ([randysul@aol.com](mailto:randysul@aol.com)) wrote about the electric-vehicle company ZAP in issue 16.04.*



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